

Stage

# IRREANTUM

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A Review of  
Mormon Literature & Film

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*"And we beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum,  
which, being interpreted, is many waters"  
(1 Nephi 17:5).*

*Irreantum: A Review of Mormon Literature and Film* is a refereed journal published three times annually (Fall, Winter, Spring/Summer) by the Association for Mormon Letters.

We seek to define the parameters of Mormon literature broadly, acknowledging a growing body of diverse work that reflects the increasing diversity of Mormon experience. We wish to publish the highest quality of writing, both creative and critical.

We welcome unsolicited submissions of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and plays that address the Mormon experience either directly or by implication. We also welcome submissions of critical essays that address such works, in addition to popular and nonprint media (such as film, folklore, theater, juvenile fiction, science fiction, letters, diaries, sermons). Critical essays may also address Mormon literature in more general terms, especially in its regional, ethnic, religious, thematic, and genre-related configurations. We also seek submissions of photos that can be printed in black and white. We welcome letters and comments.

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## From the Editors

It is Tuesday or Thursday, lunchtime. SCOTT HATCH and VALERIE HOLLADAY work in SCOTT's cluttered office, where intern ERIC LYMAN has collapsed beside a black filing cabinet and is sleeping. SCOTT, at his desk, a keyboard on his lap, shifts his attention from desktop to laptop, back again. Behind a small table, which sways under the weight of printouts and yellow sticky notes, VALERIE scowls at *The Chicago Manual of Style* open before her and takes a ladylike sip of her diet Dr. Pepper.

(SCOTT leans into a pose he saw once in a photograph of Mark Twain.)

SCOTT. Icy afternoon in January 1974, delivering the *Deseret News*, sliding down the road on my back like a turtle, arms flailing, my bike sliding after me, and the newspapers scattered between. There went the sports, and the funnies, and there's the film review section, the movie ads—one really big ad with a man, his shirttails out, holding a sword and staring at the ground. Huh. Then *Li'l Abner* slid past again. Huh, *Saturday's Warrior*.

The closest I almost got to *Saturday's Warrior* was a couple of months later; some original cast members were giving a concert in the high school auditorium. Reese Nelson and I got tossed out after my balcony-thrown paper airplane spiraled down at their feet. But I remember that those girls at the concert squealed and swooned over the *Saturday's Warrior* fellows. I didn't understand the phenomenon, but I got the transpubescent sense something big was afoot.

VALERIE. Transpubescent? Hmm . . . Interesting.

(Her face is thoughtful as she tips her head back and drains her drink, then smacks her lips and turns to the audience.)

VALERIE. My experiences with the Mormon stage lack Scott's profundity. But the stage has nevertheless had an undeniable presence in my life. I played *Clean Teeth* in our fourth grade class play on hygiene.

I did see *Saturday's Warrior* in my school auditorium (and did not get thrown out). I remember wishing that my younger brother, a lost soul much

like Jimmy, could be there and see the play and know who he was and what his place was in the world.

I've seen and read other Mormon plays in the twenty-something years since then. Some had a powerful effect on me, some were cathartic, some painful (in a variety of ways).

SCOTT AND VALERIE (*in unison*). This stage issue of *Irreantum* has been fun to work with; Scott Bronson and the contributors have filled in a lot of gaps about the phenomenon of Mormon stage for us, about the LDS culture's first forays into the transcendental human conversation of drama. And that's what's great about being an editor—the things you learn.

(*They rise. SCOTT wakes ERIC with his foot.*)

VALERIE. (*To ERIC.*) Scott and I are going to the theater to take in a bit of theatre.

SCOTT. What's the difference?

VALERIE. I'll tell you when you're older and can handle it.

(*SCOTT and VALERIE exit. ERIC gets up, sits at the table, picks up a red pen, and slumps forward, asleep; printouts cushion his head.*)

#### CURTAIN

## Prophets, Poets, and Magicians

J. SCOTT BRONSON, GUEST EDITOR

OUTSIDE OF MY HOME—the home where I'm very comfortable right now in my red plaid pajama pants, my Costco socks, and the black T-shirt on which my son painted my favorite line from *Firefly*: "Also, I can kill you with my brain"—I'm most comfortable in a theater. A playhouse. A building where plays are performed.

In my home I live with a small community of people with whom I have grown quite close over the years and with whom I am not afraid to be myself. In a theater—any theater—I am comfortable because I know what goes on in there. I'm fully aware of all that goes into making what happens there happen. I know everyone's job, and I can do most of them—the designing I will leave to more billowy imaginations, but the rest of it doesn't trouble me in the least.

Primarily, I am an actor of plays, a writer of plays, and a director of plays. I have been a stage manager, a properties manager, a stage hand, a set builder, a light board operator, a sound board operator, a painter, and a sweeper. I have even attempted set, lighting, costume, makeup, and sound design and been adequately successful at them. I have not ever, nor shall I, make an attempt to build costumes. Someday I may make a go at something dramaturgical in nature. Basically, I'm a theatre monger—or mongrel—depending on how you want to look at it.

I'm not sure exactly how this happened. It wasn't planned, I can tell you that much. I don't think anybody plans to go into theatre. That would be a foolhardy course of action. Nobody does theatre, theatre does you. And if you're lucky (or cursed) enough to have been chosen, don't fight it; give yourself over to the thespian path and revel in your fortune. Not that you will gain a fortune of gold or any other kind of material wealth; you likely will not. But you are fortunate to be one who will acquire one of the rarest of treasures in this world . . . wonderment. If left to myself for a time in a playhouse, even one I've never been in before, my imagination will begin to conjure the spirits of plays past and plays yet to come. I can sense the presence of lives—real lives and invented lives. The lives of those who present and the lives of those presented. I begin to feel and almost see the ghosts of individuals who surely could not exist without

the bodies, minds, and imaginations of the flesh and blood beings who seem to charm these creatures out of nothing. Abracadabra: let there be life. In an empty, silent playhouse, one is never alone.

While it is true that a fair number of these phantoms have been dull and uninspiring, there have indeed been a notable few that have enlarged my view, my very experience of life. No, of Life. I've encountered these harbingers of light passively, as a witness from the seats; and I've met them full on as a participant in their short, intensely meaningful life spans.

One of these was Kent, King Lear's devoted friend and servant. In rehearsal one night at the Castle Theater in Provo, I scrunched into as small a ball of shivering flesh as is possible for one as rotund as I and watched as the incomparable Ivan Crosland, playing Lear, came upon the mud-encrusted Reese Purser, playing Edgar, in our imagined tempest in the woods. Ivan took Reese's hands and drew them out, forming a cross of Reese's body as he said, "What hast thou been?" In his frantic Tom O'Bedlam guise, Edgar proclaimed, "A servingman, proud in heart and mind; that curled my hair, wore gloves in my cap; serv'd the lust of my mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with her" (3.4.78-82).

Suddenly, it occurred to me that, through libeled Edgar's fear and frustration, William Shakespeare was giving me a glimpse into the human side of Christ's Gethsemane suffering. Edgar doesn't describe what he has been, he describes himself as what he is, a servingman (the servant of mankind?) who has committed a number of punishable sins. But Edgar had done none of those things; just as Christ committed none of the sins he suffered for. Was there a part of the Savior's mind that was as tortured and frightened as Edgar's? St. Matthew describes Christ's dread this way: "[He] began to be sorrowful and very heavy. . . . Then saith he . . . My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. . . . And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (26:37-39).

For someone with compassion and imagination and no reticence to use the latter to examine the former, these few lines from the Bible may be enough to move one's spirit to a heartfelt understanding of the Savior's plight. Up until that moment on that night on that stage, I'd thought I had both imagination and compassion to spare. What a revelation to discover that I had barely begun to feel.

I wish I had the time and the space here to describe exactly how worshipful it felt to spend three and a half or four months working on *Trail of Dreams*. I will forever be grateful to Marvin Payne for first, writing the play with James Arrington and Steven Kapp Perry; second, casting my wife and me in the

production they mounted at the Scera in Orem, Utah; and third, most importantly, making me sit down and shut up when I tried to get out of the thing on the first night of rehearsals.

Though I have been in musicals, I'm not really a singer. I can sort of carry a tune, but I don't read music and I have no vocal training at all. The first rehearsal for *Trail of Dreams* was a singing rehearsal. Steve handed out sheet music to everyone and had us sit in groups according to vocal range (I sat in the back in a group of one) and said something like, "I want you to look at the top of page twenty-six where the tenors and the sopranos come together in a major fifth above the restaurant where the basses are eating hamburgers while the altos are all off to the bathroom washing their hands." Or something like that. "Starting on the second measure after the break, ready and . . ." And everyone sang beautifully. Except me, of course. I just sat there twiddling my lips.

After fifteen minutes without singing a single note, I finally got up and took Marvin aside. "Marvin, you have to get somebody else; I can't do this. I mean, I can learn a song if someone takes the time to play it for me over and over again, but we don't have time for that. You need to drop me now while you still have time to get someone else." Marvin smiled and told me not to worry, everything would turn out all right.

I have been an active churchgoing Latter-day Saint for most of my life; I have served a mission, been to the temple a number of times, given and received blessings; I have done all these things and had many remarkable experiences in the process, and still, performing in that play stands out in my mind as the most worshipful thing I have done.

A theater can be a holy place. A play can be a sacrament. It can be a testament, even an expiation. The stage is the altar where the offering is laid and burnt in the fire of breath, brio, the vigor of human lives whose words, thoughts, and deeds rise like prayers with the sustaining vote of laughter, tears, and applause from the audience. Am I a propagandist if I claim that the intent of all my artistic labors is to build the kingdom of God? Some will say that the two concepts—propaganda and art—cannot coexist on the same plane. I think that's hogwash. If the purpose of propaganda is to spread ideas or information in the service of a cause, how does art not fit into that definition?

If we are honest with ourselves as artists, we will admit that our intent is to get everyone else in the world to think just like us. That's as much propaganda as a political ad. If an artist has no purpose for creating and disseminating their work, then it's onanistic and can demand no involvement from any community.

I have enjoyed—in the greatest spiritual sense of that word—blessed sustenance

from all the communities that I have worked for and within. From the great roar of applause that suddenly burst forth from our high school peers when Chris Amaro and I walked out for our bows after performing the roles of Bloody Mary and Luther Billis in *South Pacific* to the tear-stained hug I got from an unknown audience member who had just seen a performance of my play *Stones*, I have been nurtured and nourished by the love that comes from all those who appreciate—even in simple ways—the offerings I bring them.

The community I cherish most begins with two people: God and me. Once I've figured out how the two of us are getting along and how I believe we can improve the relationship, I begin adding people to my community who I judge are able to help me develop that relationship the way I want to. This can (and actually does) include all the members of my family. And at this point, it also includes a great many people . . . of every stripe. The point is, the community that deserves and receives my devotion all flows out of one person. The rest of it is fluid; the group grows and shrinks from day to day . . . by choice. Mine. And my intent is to serve that community.

I am not a scholar; I am an artist of meager, though earnest, means who was given the assignment to talk about the Mormon Stage. My heart offers sincere gratitude to the late Laraine Wilkins, who presented this opportunity to me, I think mainly, because I happened to be standing in front of her when the idea struck. I'm not sure if this issue has turned out quite the way she had envisioned, but the spirit of it is true . . . I hope.

In a devotional speech delivered at BYU in 1976, Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "Because of what [artists] do, we are able to feel and learn very quickly . . . some spiritual things that we would otherwise learn very slowly." I have gathered here the voices of other artists—prophets, poets, and magicians in their unique ways—whose works I believe have hastened, and will continue to hasten, our learning and feeling for God's purposes.

In earnest,

—J. Scott Bronson  
Orem, Utah  
March 2007



J. SCOTT BRONSON

Duncan in William  
Shakespeare's *Macbeth*  
in the Actors' Repertory  
Theatre Ensemble  
production at the  
Castle Theater in Provo,  
Utah—2005

Paige Afton Bronson,  
photographer



## Dramaturgical Perspectives of the Mormon Stage

SHELLEY T. GRAHAM

If Shakespeares are to be or not to be  
Among ourselves, the saints of latter days,  
We must, as Joseph, study, question, see  
What virtues lay in Shakespeare's words and ways.  
Before the Prophet's prayer was ever said  
He long had savored well the words he read.

—From "Shakespeares of Our Own—II" by Gideon Burton<sup>1</sup>

THE CALL FOR A STRONG, artistically critical culture has come from great Mormon thinkers and writers like Spencer W. Kimball and Orson F. Whitney and from critics like Wayne Booth and Eugene England. A brief historical analysis reveals that Mormon theatre (1) is built on a solid aesthetic foundation, (2) enjoys broad theological support, and (3) stems from an earnest desire to produce great works. From the large body of works that could be classified as Mormon theatre, this article explores three specific subgenres: melodrama, musical, and realism. The brief genre histories that follow demonstrate representative works as historiographic evidence of the cultural and religious paradigms from which they spring: in each can be found the dramaturgical elements that are building toward a healthy creative environment.

The plays in these subgenres, some of which might have been more popular than masterful, provide a valuable record of the culture that produced them. The dramaturgical strengths highlighted in each genre reveal my perspectives on the future success of Mormon theatre. I hope the following brief critical explorations will contribute to the small body of dramatic criticism already established in our Mormon artistic community and enlarge our understanding of, and our appreciation for, different styles of Mormon drama. Before outlining dramaturgy in these genres, this paper reviews the discipline itself, particularly three of its philosophies that will serve as tools for exploring the history of Mormon theatre.

1. See the entire sonnet (and its companion, "Shakespeares of Our Own—I") in Burton's article "Keeping Company with Wayne Booth: Ethical Responsibility and the Conduct of Mormon Criticism."

### A SMOKING ROOM FOR MORMONS?

The older, more literal definition of *dramaturgy* means the working of drama (or playwriting) in the same way *metallurgy* describes the process of creating things from metal. In the theatre world today, however, when someone mentions "dramaturgy" they are most likely discussing the current practices of new play development and educational outreach efforts that began accompanying theatre in the United States in the early 1970s—a broad scope of efforts ranging from historical research to rehearsal workshops to post-show discussions. As the field grows, so does the awareness of the value that such practices add to the theatre event as a whole. In my investigation of the history of Mormon drama, I see a variety of ways in which the subgenres of our theatre have relied on sound dramaturgical principles for success. More interestingly, perhaps, I see the future of Mormon drama succeeding as these dramaturgical foundations are more deeply implemented and capitalized upon.

The discipline today known as dramaturgy has foundations in early theatre throughout the world, both in the East and in the West. The Greek play festivals at Dionysus and the shadow puppet theatre of India all used elements of dramaturgical philosophy, and so it should be no surprise that our own religious theatrical history shows dramaturgical elements as well. I find three philosophies specifically instrumental in the success or artistic value of our work as Mormon artists.

The first dramaturgical philosophy is the encouragement of critical perspectives. One of the earliest practitioners to begin the codification of dramaturgy was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in Germany in 1767, with his biweekly publication known as *The Hamburg Dramaturgy*. Though he spent his writing time discussing the Hamburg National Theatre on multiple levels, including acting and production, the publication was largely a call for critical perspectives on their own work. He had achieved some success as a playwright, so much of his criticism focused on creating a new national style of theatre, one which expressed specifically the culture and aesthetics of the German people, who incidentally were just beginning to establish themselves collectively as Germans. I believe that the more willing we are to call for critical perspectives on our work, in form as well as content, the more success we will see in establishing who we are collectively, and individually, as Mormons. As Lessing himself said in *The Hamburg Dramaturgy*, the goal of any good theatre is "to enlighten the mass and not confirm them in their prejudices or in their ignoble mode of thought."<sup>2</sup> The desire to enlighten is present in the best Mormon drama, and in much of

2. As quoted in Schechter, "In the Beginning," 18.



the "modern" Mormon drama, the play structure is intent on revealing those prejudices found in Mormon culture.

The idea of encouraging critical thinking in audience members was further developed in the dramaturgy of Bertolt Brecht, also in Germany in the early to middle twentieth century. Several of Brecht's philosophical approaches to the theatre are now standard in the practice of dramaturgy and are evident in the various styles of Mormon drama. One such approach (and my second dramaturgical philosophy) is termed the *collective*, which has as its basis the philosophy that great art comes from the pooled ideas from the minds and artistic styles of many people, united thematically and ideologically. For the Brecht Collective, this uniting theme was the encouragement of an active spectator, one who comes to the theater not to have stories wash over him, but who comes to participate in a political and theatrical event. A similar collective approach to theatre was present in the earliest days of Mormon drama, both in Nauvoo and in the Salt Lake Valley, though with a slightly different organizing ideology.

The final dramaturgical element at play in Mormon drama, and one that I believe we could benefit from seeing more of, is the idea of a *smoking room*. Setting the obvious Word of Wisdom concerns aside, the smoking room was Brecht's way of describing an atmosphere before, during, and after the performance that encouraged informal but serious discussion about performance and meaning. Though the smoking room idea began as a description of a physical locale, within or just outside the theater space, for this discussion to take place, over time the idea morphed into a description of the style of epic theatre Brecht would become known for. The smoking room theory pervaded his work, and much of the Mormon drama that today might be described as "realism" shows a similar theoretical underpinning.

The three dramaturgical terms I've described so far, *critical perspective*, *collective*, and *smoking room*, are more useful for the ideas they suggest than for their actual terminology. Certainly the ideas have been employed in theatre long before they were terms coined by practicing dramaturgs. The sections that follow will discuss the sometimes less-than-visible dramaturgical elements found in specific works of three subgenres of Mormon drama, namely, melodrama, musical, and realism. I recognize, of course, that I am neglecting several subgenres (pageants, nonrealism, opera among them), but I believe that much of what I conclude in this article can be extended to those neglected genres quite easily. In these applications of theory to dramatic work, I intend to model the kind of critical discourse that I feel is essential to establishing a strong Mormon theatre. More than merely suggest that we should be critically minded or explain

why we should be critically minded, I would like to offer examples of works in Mormon dramatic history worthy of close critical discussion.

#### MELODRAMA AND THE COLLECTIVE

The history of the theatre in the early days of the Church, beginning with Joseph Smith in Nauvoo and continued by Brigham Young in Salt Lake City, has been fairly well documented. A number of theses and dissertations, as well as several books, have been written chronicling the rise of the theatre from humble beginnings, many devoted to the running of the Salt Lake Theatre.<sup>3</sup> From records of the theatre season productions, it is fair to estimate that most of the full-length productions in the early days of Salt Lake City can be considered melodrama.<sup>4</sup>

When the Musical and Dramatic Company, the first theatrical company organized in the Valley,<sup>5</sup> took to the stage for the very first time, they performed a melodrama entitled *The Triumph of Innocence*. When the company was reorganized the following year as the Deseret Dramatic Association, the two highlight productions of its inaugural season were *The Stranger* and *Hector Timid*, works by the most prolific and one of the most famous writers of melodrama in America and Europe, August von Kotzebue. The Deseret Dramatic Association would continue to play works by Kotzebue and other prominent melodramatists for years to come.

One of the more famous melodramas to be staged at the Salt Lake Theatre in 1862 was Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *Pizarro*, an adaptation of Kotzebue's famous play *Die Spanier in Peru*. The play had performed once, reportedly to Joseph Smith's delight, in Nauvoo, with Brigham Young playing the role of the Incan High Priest, but in the 1862 performance that role was given to another member of the company as Brigham Young was "the reigning High Priest in reality."<sup>6</sup>

Although these early melodramas would not be considered Mormon theatre, the melodramatic sensibility was part of the general religious climate of the Second Great Awakening, from which the Mormon religion emerged. The

3. For works that look specifically at the theatre in Salt Lake City, see *A History of the Theatre in Salt Lake City* by Myrtle B. Henderson, *The Romance of an Old Playhouse* by George D. Pyper, and *Pioneer Theatre in the Desert* by Ila Fisher Maughan.

4. In reference to the stage definition, a melodrama is a plot-driven play using a cast of stock characters, including a hero who must overcome a villain to rescue a heroine, emphasizing the triumph of good over evil.

5. The company was formed mostly from existing members of the Nauvoo Brass Band, which Joseph Smith had organized in Nauvoo prior to the exodus to the Salt Lake Valley.

6. Pyper, *The Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 106. The role was given to George Teasdale, who would later be ordained a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1882.

frequency with which the Mormon theatre groups performed melodrama is historiographic evidence of a community sensibility that valued the melodramatic, not only on their stages, but also in their worship. According to Megan Sanborn Jones, "Religious practice borrowed melodramatic structure and staging techniques, and religious rhetoric of the time is shaped in a distinctly melodramatic style. . . . The formal elements of moral polarity and poetic justice parallel a nineteenth-century outlook on Christian behavior in this life and rewards and punishments in the life to come."<sup>7</sup>

An excellent example of Jones's description of melodrama's formal elements and their parallels to nineteenth-century Christian paradigm is the Mormon melodrama *Corianton, An Aztec Romance* by Orestes Utah Bean.<sup>8</sup> First performed in the Salt Lake Theatre August 11, 1902, the play follows a "conversion" structure, neatly outlining the righteous and the wicked characters and the consequences of their behavior. The tragic romance between Corianton, "wayward son of Alma," and Zoan ze Isabel, the Zoramite harlot (described as "A Siren" in the *dramatis personae*) confirms for its Mormon audience the dangers of wickedness and the blessings of repentance. The following lines from the final reconciliation scene illustrate this affirmation:

CORIANTON. From my heart thou art forgiven.

(Invisible quartet sings "Forgiven")

ZOAN. Thy noble self could say naught else. I feel a something singing in my heart—a melody which chimes "forgiven." And to this anthem chants a harmony as if by angels sung, "Another soul is saved by grace." "Repented and is saved this day."

CORIANTON. Zoan, thou art about to meet thy Maker. Before my father; before thy God!—declare thy verdict on me!

ZOAN. High Priest Alma—Nephite maiden—Corianton is unblemished. (Dies.)

ALMA AND RELIA. Innocent!

ALMA (taking both his hands). My son! My son! Thou hast bourne thy burthen nobly! (Embraces CORIANTON.) Forgive me, son. I never knew how great thy heart!

7. Jones, unpublished dissertation. I'm grateful to Megan Jones for providing me with a personal copy of the manuscript, which when published promises to be an important work in the body of criticism of Mormon drama, particularly the (anti-)Mormon melodrama.

8. Bean's play is based on the serialized 1889 novel of the same name by B. H. Roberts. The stage version played on Broadway for one week in September 1912 (under the shortened title *An Aztec Romance*), and nearly twenty years later Bean wrote the screenplay for the 1931 film entitled *Corianton, A story of unholy love*.

CORIANTON. Forgive thee, father; all forgiven—She forgiven too!

(Signifies ZOAN by Maker.)

(ZOAN on couch, C., CORIANTON and RELIA joined hand in hand immediately rear; father ALMA blessing, the denouement rear of them.)<sup>9</sup>

Zoan ze Isabel, who Corianton says has given "her life a ransom for [her sins]," affirms that glorious salvation is extended to the repentant sinner. As one of the more visible organizing principles of Christian and Mormon theology, the salvation ideal is evident in all the various subgenres of melodrama.

It is also a principle that cohered the early Mormon theatre groups, from the Nauvoo Brass Band to the Deseret Dramatic Association. It was in these early groups that the dramaturgical concept of a collective proved beneficial. In *Pioneer Theatre in the Desert*, Maughan contends that the performance groups were driven by a common ideology: "The same unity of purpose that bound the Mormon people in religion and in the preservation of life through the first trying years in the mountain desert carried over into the field of entertainment. Unselfish co-operation was the key to success."<sup>10</sup> Based on the numerous places in which Brigham Young clarifies his position on the importance of the theatre, we see that the unity of purpose was not only in pursuit of entertainment but also in pursuit of achieving a higher spirituality. In the *SLC Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, January 12, 1865, President Young issued a public statement on the value of the theatre to the Mormon community, in which he said, "With our efforts to instruct, please and amuse one another by means of the stage . . . though we may not conform to the standard of the world, it is our privilege nevertheless to have that Spirit with us that will cause light and peace and joy and a feeling of satisfaction to fill our bosoms."

Similar to the work of the Brecht collective, the early Mormon theatre groups clarified among themselves their goals as a theatrical company and committed themselves to productions that would achieve those goals. Early in the history of the Deseret Dramatic Association three members of the company who had "freely imbibed and who had been obnoxious" were excused at rehearsals. Their dismissal, says Maughan, was a courageous action, since "one of the offenders was a gifted actor and much needed for planned productions."<sup>11</sup> For years, the success of the DDA was based on the commitment of its members to the Association's ability to ease the anxiety and increase the spirituality of

9. Bean, *Corianton, An Aztec Romance*, 60.

10. Maughan, 34.

11. Maughan, 31–32.

the burgeoning community of Saints in the Salt Lake Valley. An early leader of the DDA, Phil Margetts, recorded that they had in their midst "some of the best mechanics, best artist-musicians, and a great many possessing a wonderful amount of dramatic talent";<sup>12</sup> nevertheless, Robertson notes, the members "received no salaries for their work. They attended rehearsals every night of the week except Wednesdays and Saturdays, when performances were given. The rehearsals often lasted until midnight or later, even though the players all held regular jobs during the day."<sup>13</sup>

The unity in purpose among the members of these Mormon theatre collectives was most likely solidified by the official statements by the Prophet Brigham Young and by the blending of social and religious responsibility. Though Brecht's dramaturgical collective was also a group of voluntary members united in a common vision, Brother Brigham was still considered the driving force behind their work. He was also considered in many ways the father of the early theatre collectives.

On March 6, 1862, President Young sent personal invitations to many members of the community inviting them to attend the dedication ceremony of the new Salt Lake Theatre. Before the dedicatory prayer was offered, he addressed the guests with an admonition that they do their part, whether as members of the dramatic companies or members of the audience, that they might allow the theater to serve its proper place in society. "I want you to pray for them that the Lord Almighty may preserve them from ever having one wicked thought in their bosoms, that our actors may be just as virtuous, truthful, and humble before God and each other as though they were on a mission to preach the gospel . . . I wish the dramatic company to seek diligently and in all kindness to promote the happiness of all concerned."<sup>14</sup> With such a mandate, and a subsequent prayer dedicating the theater that all who enter may "feel the quickening influence of Thy Holy Spirit vivifying and strengthening their whole being,"<sup>15</sup> the collective had perhaps the most formal, divinely mandated charter of any other collective in history.

As time progressed, the company evolved, members were eventually paid for their service, and evolving groups became less directly connected with the Church and its ecclesiastical leaders. This kind of dramaturgical foundation, however, would provide a sound philosophical basis for the later Mormon

theatre collectives, including the Playwrights' Circle, the Nauvoo Theatrical Society, and the Handcart Ensemble.

#### MUSICALS AND THE CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The second wave of Mormon theatre came during the late 1960s and 1970s, and again reflecting the current national theatrical trends, the wave was musical. Though the LDS Church continued to support the theatre throughout the early twentieth century,<sup>16</sup> it wasn't until the rise in popularity of the musical that Mormon theatre saw a rebirth of public interest. In a 1977 *Sunstone* article entitled "Mormon Shakespeares: A Study of Contemporary Mormon Theatre," Frederick Bliss and PQ Gump (a team better known today as Orson Scott Card) state that of the five plays the authors consider "watershed," in the rebirth of Mormon theatre, three of them are musicals. *The Order Is Love*, *Stone Tables*, and *Saturday's Warrior* are the three musicals, written between 1971 and 1974, which Card sees as foundations for good Mormon theatre to come.

The role of the musical in American theatre was shifting at this time, indicative of a cultural desire to see life portrayed differently on the stage. The musical era of *Oklahoma* and *Carousel* was transitioning to one of more daring subjects and styles, like *Hair*. This transition wasn't always smooth, and many critics argued that the Broadway stage was no place for rock-'n'-roll music, drugs, and war protest. Others, however, saw musicals like *Hair* beginning to express a cultural self-awareness attempting to deal with issues of prejudice, gender questions, and anti-war sentiment. The new musical paradigm paved the way not only for more open discussion of social issues on the stage, but also for more experimentation in the musical style itself (to be seen later in the works of artists like Stephen Sondheim).

Although not experimental in style, Mormon theatre rode this wave of increasing critical self-examination, as illustrated in the three watershed musicals mentioned above. *The Order Is Love* by Carol Lynn Pearson and Lex de Azevedo was the first of the musicals, chronologically, and one which was unashamed of its intended commercial appeal. Though many fault the play for such a market-savvy approach, there is clearly value, particularly when inviting self-criticism from the audience, in appealing to their tastes, senses of humor, etc. But *Order*

12. Pyper, 44.

13. Robertson, 44.

14. Maughan, 84.

15. Pyper, 91. The dedicatory prayer was given by President Daniel H. Wells.

16. Several theatrical venues continued to be supported during the period between the melodramatics and the musical, including church pageants and local road show kinds of performances. The Church also fostered new play development to a certain extent through the annual publication of Mormon plays to be produced mostly through the Mutual Improvement Association. For more on the development of these otherwise unpublished works, see Morris Clinger's thesis, "A History of Theatre in Mormon Colleges and Universities."

was not merely commercially driven, it was also well-written, which proved to be a fairly good combination in terms of the musical's playability in LDS communities: Trilogy Arts picked up the paperback publication and the original cast album sold fairly well. Card suggests that "though *The Order Is Love* was not innovative, it was the first really well-constructed Mormon play."<sup>17</sup>

Among other things, the play invites a Mormon audience to look critically at their own history. Pearson did substantial research into Church history and the history of Orderville itself before writing the libretto. Several moments in the script call for an audience to reflect on the theological foundations for, and the frustrations of living, the United Order. Early in Act Two Catherine Ann, the lead female character and recently added member of the Order, voices her frustrations with the seeming inability of the Order to account for individuality among its members. After being told that she might not have the piano she hoped for for a very long time, the following conversation takes place:

CATHERINE ANN. Well, at least we'll have new tablecloths. I put in the request myself, and you promised you'd take it up with the committee. Did you?

EZRA. I did.

CATHERINE ANN. Well, what did they say?

EZRA. They said—no.

CATHERINE ANN. But—why?

EZRA. Getting the new woolen factory pretty near cleaned us out. We'll have to go slow on purchases for a while.

CATHERINE ANN. But I didn't ask for lace—or even linen. Just something white and clean—that doesn't have years of stains and spots . . .

EZRA. Now Catherine Ann, coverings for a table can't be all that important.

CATHERINE ANN. For some, no. For others, yes. That's what's wrong with the Order, Brother Cooper. It doesn't make allowances for the fact that everybody is different. And the Lord *must* have meant them to be different. One person'll have no use in the world for a thing—and without it the soul of the next person'll just wither up. We've got to have some room to be different, some right to a little different step if we want. We've got to.<sup>18</sup>

Although the musical is never clearly critical of Church leadership, it does

17. Bliss and Gump, 57.

18. Pearson, *The Order Is Love*, 71–72.

provide the audience member with an opportunity to reconsider the practicality of these experimental living arrangements assigned by Brigham Young. Ultimately *Order* reaffirms the Mormon cultural perspective that the United Order was instituted as a trial of faith for its members, and that though the various orders failed, the individuals who had willingly and faithfully participated in them were blessed (as is evident in Catherine Ann's return to the small town even after experiencing life, with a piano, in Salt Lake City.)

It does not provide this reaffirmation, however, without also providing the audience with an opportunity to be critically reflective; in this sense, *Order* follows the dramaturgical style of Lessing. As the musical genre gained the ability to speak credibly about politics and social issues, the Mormon musical also gained the ability to request critical perspectives from its audience members. Pearson and de Azevedo were essentially asking their audience to consider how they were defined, as a group. The Mormon identity, much like the German identity seen by Lessing, would take shape during these musical years. As *Order* laid the groundwork for plays like *Saturday's Warrior*, the audience perspective grew from one eager to see itself, in any form, on the stage, to one that was increasingly more critical of how it wanted to be defined, which explains the immediate success and successive mocking of the musical period.<sup>19</sup>

#### REALISM AND THE SMOKING ROOM

Chronologically, the realism period in Mormon theatre history could arguably have begun around the same time as the musical period or even earlier, although it is broad enough as a category to include works still being written and produced today. Again from "Mormon Shakespeares," Card suggests that one of the earliest forays into Mormon realism was Martin Kelly's *And They Shall Be Gathered*, followed closely by Robert Elliot's *Fires of the Mind*. He praises both pieces for "believable" and "real" characters, for capturing Mormon colloquial language, and for their "fair treatment of Mormon and Gentile alike."<sup>20</sup>

The most prolific writers of the Mormon realism genre following these two watershed productions are Tom Rogers and Eric Samuelsen, with Rogers writing most of his work in the 1970s and 1980s and Samuelsen in the late 1990s continuing through to today. Obviously there are potential concerns about using a term so broad as "realism" to define a style of theatre from the

19. Perhaps the most memorable mockery of the musical period is the Salt Lake Acting Company's *Saturday's Voyeur*, a satirical look at life in Utah among a Mormon culture. The cabaret-style production debuted in 1978 and is still running (opening each year around Pioneer Day) as of July 2006.

20. Bliss and Gump, 56–59.



1970s through the early twenty-first century, but in keeping with a very general definition of the term, it will be beneficial as it distinguishes the genre from musicals, pageants, and other "nonrealistic" styles of theatre.

The growth of the realism genre in Mormon theatre shares many of the same ideological foundations as that of the musical genre. It invites critical perspectives on what it means to be Mormon. In the best circumstances this kind of thinking happens not only in the theater space but also in the audience members long after the theatrical event has taken place. In this way, we might look at Mormon realism inspiring a smoking room style of dialogue. Here is the opportunity for broadening critical perspectives, not only among those specifically concerned with contributing to a body of criticism, but also with the person who is just interested in reading another good book or seeing another good show. This is not to say, of course, that there isn't a place—or, in fact, a dire need—for written critical and theoretical explorations of Mormon art (or more specifically, Mormon drama.) My suggestion here is that the dialogue might be more complete if there are casual conversations in the general Mormon community as well as scholarly debate among those whose profession it is to speak critically.

In an AML paper presented in 1995, Gideon Burton defends the need for cultural dialogue I have just described for theatre to take place for Mormon arts in general. He says later, quoting Wayne Booth,

We must also focus consciously on creating a climate in which good art is understood, appreciated, and encouraged. . . . Such healthy verbal exchange can create the climate in which lives and arts together flourish. "To me," [Wayne Booth] says in *The Company We Keep*, "the most important of all critical tasks is to participate in—and thus to reinforce—a critical culture, a vigorous conversation, that will nourish in return those who feed us with their narratives."<sup>21</sup>

The dramaturgical theories that might foster such vigorous conversation include formal conversations, like those had in talkback sessions, pre-show lectures, and soundly written criticism, as well as informal conversations, which one could argue would be more representative of a *broad* critically thoughtful Mormon culture.

The work of Tom Rogers, particularly the works anthologized in *God's Fools*, should be considered some of the first works of the realism genre to embrace dramaturgical ideals (although the dramaturgy in its current connotation was just beginning to be a part of theatrical discourse in the late 1970s). In fact,

21. Burton, "Ethical Responsibility," 2.

*Reunion* had formal talkback sessions with the audience members following its performances in winter 1979 and spring 1980 on the BYU campus. In his preface to the collection, Rogers invites his audiences to reconsider a Mormon perspective on the father/son relationship as the theme is explored in the four plays that make up the anthology. He invites the communal discourse, almost prayerfully, at the end of the preface, by saying, "May we more freely accord each other the privilege to err: not that we condone error but that, as each of us darkly gropes for greater conviction—and with sincere intent—we will respect the inviolability of one another's agency."<sup>22</sup>

I believe that when Rogers encourages a "privilege to err" he is suggesting a certain amount of relativity in what might be considered error in the context of dialogue. Certainly the themes of forgiveness running throughout the four plays in *God's Fools* would suggest that errors can be reconsidered and paradigms shifted in the course of dialogue. Just as Juanita Brooks's research on the Mountain Meadows Massacre encourages an LDS readership to reconsider those tragic events and their place in Church history, so does Rogers's *Fire in the Bones*, based on Brooks's research, encourage the LDS audience to reassess and perhaps reassign their sympathies in the dramatic story.

In more recent years, there has been more specific dramaturgical involvement in new play development. Ventures like the Playwrights' Circle and other writing groups have encouraged constructive criticism and continued development of Mormon plays. In the early 1990s, a group of playwrights living mostly in Utah Valley formally organized a Mormon writers' group called the Playwrights' Circle. The instigator for the project was James Arrington, head of playwriting at Utah Valley State College and writer of Mormon theatre classics like *The Farley Family Reunion*. Arrington was elected president of the Playwrights' Circle and foundational members include Marvin Payne, Eric Samuelsen, Scott Bronson, Doug Stewart, Tim Slover, and others. The group was formal enough to include membership dues and a charter outlining their goals as writers. Samuelsen describes the group as "dynamic" and suggests that they are as much a support group and a social circle as they are a writers group, dedicated to reading one another's work and discussing its aesthetic merit. Though the group meetings have declined recently, Samuelsen still sees his participation in the group as an important part of being a Mormon writer.<sup>23</sup> The formation of groups like the Playwrights' Circle evidences the fundamental artistic value of the smoking room dramaturgical theory. As critical dialogue

22. Rogers, xiv.

23. Samuelsen, personal phone conversation, July 13, 2006.

takes place among artists and audience/readers, it strengthens the general creative climate and develops an environment in which great art may arise.

The discipline of dramaturgy seeks to establish such environments, and in the past five years the dramaturgy program at Brigham Young University has contributed to a growing critical climate. Also, the new play development course (Writers/Directors/Actors Workshop) at BYU cultivates collaboration among playwrights and dramaturgs, fostering young Mormon writers, team taught by the head of playwriting, Eric Samuelsen, and the head of dramaturgy, me. The plays that go through this workshop process sometimes, but not always, include Mormon subjects and themes. Two Mormon plays which recently came out of the WDA workshop, *Family* by Eric Samuelsen and *Tell the Heather* by Morag Plaice Shepherd, benefited from the work of dramaturgs both in the writing process and later in the production process.<sup>24</sup>

Samuelsen's plays in general could be characterized as challenging to a conventional conservative Mormon population, and therefore the workshop process was a valuable forum for discussing not only the play itself but also the gospel issues it raised. Samuelsen says, "I hate to think what *Family* would have been without that time in WDA."<sup>25</sup> In *Family* we see a Mormon father and mother seeking to understand the decisions made by their adult children who are struggling with their testimonies. In fact, throughout the play we see each character, including Mom and Dad, reveal to the audience very personal, very human, very *Mormon* lapses of faith and understanding. Near the end of the play, Mom and Dad have a conversation in which they express their concerns for their children and yet reveal that they deal with the tough situations in completely different ways, wrestling with what they understand their eternal parental responsibilities to be.

DAD. I had no idea what to say to her [their daughter Ashley]. I listened mostly. Urged her to pray. She said she has.

MOM. To no avail, right?

DAD. That's what she says.

MOM. That "stupor of thought," "burning in the bosom" thing never worked for me, either.

DAD. It has, sometimes, for me.

MOM. Not for me. I get answers other ways. . . . [The kids] are all too old for this. That's the thing, they're all like that.

24. *Family* was published in the March 2005 issue of *Sunstone* (14–41). *Tell the Heather* appears in this issue of *Irreantum* (128–142).

25. Samuelsen, phone conversation.

DAD. Drifting, rootless.

MOM. They're not supposed to be rootless. It's our job to give them roots!

DAD. Or suggest places where roots might be found.

MOM. You know, times like this, you drive me crazy.

DAD. What do you mean?

MOM. You, sitting there, analyzing it. Sort of sadly. Saying things like "places where roots might be found."

DAD. Do you analyze it differently?

MOM. I don't turn neat phrases for it. I get pissed off!<sup>26</sup>

Both Mom and Dad are concerned for their children, are aware of their responsibilities as parents, and are frustrated by their seeming lack of ability to help them. Though these concerns and many others were addressed specifically in the play development class, most discussions came in the formal talkback sessions after the performances. Led by a dramaturg, the post-play discussions often brought audience members into the larger debate on the kinds of issues Mormon art should be addressing and the style in which they should be addressed. The smoking room style dialogue encouraged artists and audience members alike to consider the implications of the playwriting choices, good or bad, in the larger context of Mormon drama. One participant in the discussion suggested that plays such as these should end with a strong message of hope, a family council and priesthood blessings to resolve the issues in an ideal fashion, demonstrating the truth of the promises given to parents who do all they can to raise their children righteously. Other participants in the discussions suggested that the typical Mormon family today has to deal with all these issues and more and wondered why the writer held anything back.

Conversations like these, following plays in the modern Mormon realism tradition, are the evidence of the way in which a sound dramaturgical perspective on new work contributes to a vigorous critical dialogue. Another play to encourage this kind of dialogue among audience members, for different reasons, is *Tell the Heather*. This play is much more subtle in its Mormonness, never mentioning the Church by name. And because it takes place in Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s, the visible LDS culture stamp is missing. The story follows a young girl named Shauna, who experiences a desire to know God at a young age, long before she becomes converted to the gospel. By the end of the play we (LDS audience members) are only left with hints of Shauna's coming conversion to the Mormon faith. The play is scattered with lines from both the

26. Samuelsen, *Family*, 34.

younger and the older Shauna characters, who suggest that she felt something deeply spiritual in the land, in the world around her, long before she would turn to religion. Early in the one-act play, she and a friend discover the "secret" of the Loch Ness monster and Shauna explains,

From the time that Marjorie and I discovered the secret of the Loch Ness monster, I turned to looking at the land to feel the wind and to see the colors, to see the questions. . . . It's always on this land that me mind opens up and I can understand and contemplate her secrets. It's this earth that lets me know that there's life above.<sup>27</sup>

In her relationships with her childhood friends, her rebellious big brother, and her harsh but caring father, Shauna shares those feelings she has had about the landscape. In a very natural, subtly beautiful way, the play explores how one young woman wrestles with the questions she has about life and God and heaven. And even more beautifully, the audience is left to consider the way in which gospel principles, and even the missionaries, come into this young girl's life in a less-than-typical fashion. The closing lines of the play leave young Shauna asking more questions than receiving answers.

SHAUNA. Pa, what's gonna happen when we die?

FATHER. Just keep living and you'll find the answers, wee lassie.

SHAUNA. But do you know where we're gonna go?

FATHER. I'm no sure, Shauna. I think I have a pretty good idea for meself. But I think that if you look, you'll find bits and bobs here and there.

SHAUNA. Are you afraid to die, Pa?

FATHER. Och, Shauna. A wee bit, aye! Aye a bit scared, but no' too much, so dunna worry yourself, okay?

(Her FATHER gets his stuff and exits. SHAUNA moves down center.)

SHAUNA. I don't know what's going to happen in my life, but I do think that if I keep looking, that I'll find some of the answers that will help me understand who's up there (points up) in the sky. I often wonder who'll be there on the other side of death? Maybe I'll find some answers to the mysteriousness that I find in the castle and in the water around here. I can only hope!<sup>28</sup>

Because of the subtle qualities of this play, there were several post-play discussions that focused on finding what was Mormon about the story. Questions and quotes from the study guide that accompanied the program also

27. Shepherd, 133.

28. Shepherd, 142.

prompted similar discussions. *Tell the Heather* focuses on the questions and experiences that lead to Shauna's conversion, long before she ever actually joins the Mormon faith. For this reason it occupies an interesting place, dramaturgically, in the realm of Mormon realism.

In an article entitled "Making Mormon Cinema: Hype and Hope," Gideon Burton suggests that the reason that *Fiddler on the Roof* was so successful with audiences outside the Jewish faith was because it showed "that the Jewish experience essentially is the human experience."<sup>29</sup> I believe the same principle holds true for *Tell the Heather*. Partly because the production of this play was approached with a smoking room aesthetic, the production values mirrored the subtlety of the script and both formal and informal conversations took place about the nature of the conversion process and the ability of drama to accurately or adequately describe it. The value of the smoking room approach is that it affords playwrights the opportunity to validate what is essentially human in the Mormon experience, perhaps placing the moral center of a work within the audience/reader rather than within the text itself. By validating the human in the Mormon and the Mormon in the human, the "realism" of our theatre can continue to expand, giving rise to wider audiences and more common dialogue about good Mormon art.

#### MORE THINKING

In an address to Brigham Young University in May 1969, Hugh B. Brown offered the following suggestion regarding our responsibility to be thoughtfully engaged in our work and in our art:

One of the most important things in the world is freedom of the mind; from this all other freedoms spring. Such freedom is necessarily dangerous, for one cannot think right without running the risk of thinking wrong, but generally more thinking is the antidote for the evils that spring from wrong thinking. More thinking is required, and we call upon you . . . to exercise your God-given right to think through every proposition that is submitted to you and to be unafraid to express your opinions, with proper respect for those to whom you talk and proper acknowledgment of your own shortcomings.<sup>30</sup>

In this article, I have attempted to follow that counsel and consider how it might benefit the theatrical culture I love so dearly among Mormon artists and

29. Burton, "Making Mormon Cinema," 7.

30. Brown, "An Eternal Quest—Freedom of the Mind" (emphasis added).



audiences. President Brown's suggestion, that we must take the risk of thinking wrong and continue thinking more deeply, is a bold one and relevant to any dramaturgical discussion.

In order for Mormon drama to continue to develop, both in its current realism genre trend and outside it, we must develop a culture that is accustomed to this style of thinking, one which is willing to accept the risks and challenges presented by art, and respond to it critically. In his article on Mormon cinema, Gideon Burton applies the following quote by Wayne Booth to film, and this application can be extended to the theatre: "We won't get a great artistic [or dramatic] culture until we have a great critical culture."<sup>31</sup> In fact, as President Brown has stated, it is our responsibility to be critically minded and thoughtful.

There are many fine scholars and critics who have issued calls to arms to the artists of the Church, declaring the reasons why our drama isn't good enough yet, why we haven't yet seen a Mormon Shakespeare.<sup>32</sup> In an address to the Association for Mormon Letters in 1994, Eric Samuelsen argues, "We will never develop a satisfying Mormon drama until we have established and supported a theater from which such drama might emerge. The Mormon Shakespeare needs a Mormon Globe."<sup>33</sup> In his "Mormon Shakespears" article, Orson Scott Card argues, "Elizabethan theatre did not begin with Shakespeare: audiences had to grow up on *Box and Cox* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and other such pabulum before they were ready for *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. And if a giant should arise among the Mormon dramatists, it will be because the audience is ready. And not until."<sup>34</sup>

Building on these two ideas, let me add that in addition to a great theater space and an audience ready for great theatre, we must also have a strong dramaturgical culture to foster the coming of great Mormon drama. Through the (far-from-complete) critical explorations I offer in this paper, I have attempted to offer an objective correlative to this theory, to let the form of this paper match its content. Great plays in Mormon theatre history like *Corianton, An Aztec Romance*; *The Order Is Love*; *Family*; *Tell the Heather*; and many others need further consideration. As we build multiple Mormon drama collectives, as we maintain critical perspectives on our drama, as we seek to encourage a smoking room style

of dialogue within our society, we are promoting that dramaturgical culture which will continue to support great Mormon theatre.

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31. Burton, "Making Mormon Cinema," 17.

32. With all apologies to Orson F. Whitney, I am not interested in a Mormon Shakespeare—though a Mormon Brecht sounds pretty exciting. Those matters aside, I will continue to use this "call to arms" for Mormon dramatists for its culturally iconic import and because it is the reference to which so many Mormon dramatists respond.

33. Samuelsen, "Whither Mormon Drama?" 94.

34. Bliss and Gump, 63 (emphasis added).

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SHELLEY T. GRAHAM

Emilia in Tim Slover's *March Tale* in the Actors' Repertory Theatre Ensemble production at the Castle Theater in Provo, Utah—2000

Robert Nelson, photographer

# Fire in the Bones

THOMAS F. ROGERS

## CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

### LIEUTENANT

### FIVE SOLDIERS

MILES PACE, a friend of John D's

EMMA LEE, John D's seventeenth wife, in her early twenties

RACHEL LEE, John D's sixth wife, in her early thirties

ALMA LEE, John D's and Aggatha's son, in his mid-teens

### SECRETARY

JOHN D. LEE, a pioneer settler, in his mid-forties

JACOB HAMBLIN, a pioneer settler and Indian envoy, middle aged

GEORGE ALBERT SMITH, a Mormon Apostle, middle aged

LEWIS, a soldier

HAIGHT, an officer

DAME, an officer

LOTT, a soldier

MORRILL, a soldier

HIGBEE, a soldier

KLINGENSMITH, a soldier

KNIGHT, a soldier

AGGATHA LEE, John D's first wife, in her mid-forties

MARY ANN LEE, John D's sixteenth wife, later Alma's wife, in her early teens

PRISCILLA HAMBLIN, Jacob's wife

SAMMY LEE, son of John D. and Aggatha, in his early twenties

### SHERIFF STOKES

### MARSHAL BECKER

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Rogers: *Fire in the Bones*

### 1ST and 2ND GUARDS

### PROSECUTOR

### JUDGE BOREMAN

### COUNSELOR

### MCMURDY

## PROLOGUE

*March 23, 1877. Mountain Meadows, Utah, just after sunrise. Near a downstage wing, two men and two cloaked women (ALMA, MILES, EMMA, RACHEL) stand with backs to the audience, focusing on an object at the rear of the opposite wing. At their feet are blankets, towels, and a basin of water. Upstage center are five armed U.S. SOLDIERS and a LIEUTENANT. The SOLDIERS stand in a row. In his hand, the LIEUTENANT holds a civilian hat. A coat and muffler are draped over his arm.*

LIEUTENANT. Man your arms!

*(The SOLDIERS lower their guns to a firing position, each aimed at the same point of focus offstage. The women and younger man watch unflinchingly.)*

Ready! Aim!

DEEP MALE VOICE. *(From offstage in the direction they are aiming.)* Aim for my heart, boys!

LIEUTENANT. Fire!

*(The SOLDIERS fire. The older male spectator recoils. The guns' report is immediately followed by a muted thud—as of a body dropping into a box. The SOLDIERS slowly lower their arms and resume attention. No one moves.)*

LIEUTENANT. At ease!

*(He walks offstage in the direction of the target and returns.)*

Dismissed!

*(The SOLDIERS move offstage, opposite-stage of their target. The LIEUTENANT then walks to the four spectators, salutes, and addresses the younger of the two men, who is about thirty.)*

You may tend to the body.

*(Taking the towels and basin but leaving the blankets, the younger man gestures for the others to stay behind and goes offstage in the direction in which they have been facing and in which the SOLDIERS had fired.)*

MILES. I'll be leaving you now, Rachel . . . Emma. So you can be by yourselves.

EMMA. *(In a cockney accent.)* Thank you, Miles.

MILES. 'Taint likely we'll see each other again very soon, I reckon.

EMMA. No, I don't suppose.

MILES. Heard you might be heading south, Emma—into Arizona.

EMMA. That's right.

MILES. How about you, Rachel? Will you stay in Panguitch?

EMMA. Miles, for heaven's sake!

MILES. I'm sorry.

RACHEL. It's all right, Emma. Miles means well. He's just trying to distract us, aren't you, Miles?

MILES. No. Not exactly. Forgive me, but before I leave you I need to know . . . did he really kill those two women back then, here in the Meadows, like Jacob said he did at the trial? Because if he really did—

EMMA. Then he'd cease to be your idol.

MILES. Rachel, you were with him all those months at the penitentiary. Did he ever tell you he had or hadn't killed those two women?

RACHEL. No.

MILES. No? And you, Emma—how about you, all the time you and he were there together on the Colorado at Lonely Dell? Did he ever tell you?

EMMA. No.

MILES. No? But wouldn't he have told you if you'd asked him?

EMMA. Of course.

MILES. And, knowing that, didn't you feel compelled to ask him? Either of you?

RACHEL. We felt compelled to do just one thing, Miles—to be his wives and, as such, to give him the benefit no one else would. Not even you, it seems.

MILES. But didn't Aggatha ever tell you—not even once before she died?

*(They do not answer him.)*

*(Under his breath.)* A damn shame one of you didn't find out!

EMMA. Miles! Just be grateful you were laid up ill the day they called him to the Meadows. You might have had as much to pay—or more—and not been willing.

MILES. I've thought of that. Today again.

EMMA. I guess you will just have to keep him as your idol and always revere him, Miles—like the rest of us.

MILES. I guess I will.

EMMA. We want certainty so badly, don't we, Miles?

*(He nods. The young man returns from the wings.)*

EMMA. Can we view him, Alma?

ALMA. Not quite. First, I need the blankets.

EMMA. *(Handing them to him.)* Here.

MILES. You're sure I can't help you, Alma?

*(Shaking his head, ALMA returns to the wings.)*

RACHEL. His eldest son. John D. asked that Alma wash and dress him.

MILES. I understand, and I'll leave you now.

RACHEL. Thank you, Miles.

*(MILES embraces Emma, tips his hat, and leaves.)*

*(Embracing EMMA.)* Emma, Emma, how did it all begin? With those Missourians, I suppose—those Fanchers.

RACHEL. Things might have been different if Jacob Hamblin had been there to powwow with those blood-thirsty Indians. If Jacob hadn't stayed away so long—honeymooning another bride. I've often wondered, Emma, if he didn't just smell trouble and marry her when he did, so they would have to call on someone else to handle those rampaging Lamanites. Handling Lamanites was Jacob's special gift. Maybe because, Lord forgive me, he was deep down so very sly.

EMMA. *(As if speaking to someone directly in front of her.)* Jacob, how you've disappointed some of us. I remember the first time I saw you. You were as winning and handsome as everyone said. But I only had eyes—then and ever after, I'm proud to say—for John D. It was in Salt Lake at the Church offices—the day of our marriage. I'd just met Brother Brigham for the first time. He'd given us his blessing. We were just going out the door, and there you were, waiting your turn. Before we got away I'd also made the acquaintance of Apostle Smith.

*(The lights dim.)*

## ACT ONE

### Scene One

January 1858. Salt Lake City. The lights rise on an office waiting room. A male SECRETARY sits at a desk to one side of an imposing interior door. A wooden bench faces him at the other end of the room. A handsome man still in his thirties rises from the bench as JOHN D., in his mid-forties, emerges from the inner door, all smiles. EMMA removes her bonnet and shawl and, now wearing more youthful apparel, joins JOHN D. at the door as he ends his first speech.

JOHN D. *(Turning and facing back through the same door.)* Thank you, Brother Brigham. I'll care for her as well as I have all the others.

EMMA. *(Chuckling JOHN D. on the chin.)* And I'll tend him better than the others, Brother Brigham. You'll see.

SECRETARY. You're next, Brother Hamblin.

*(The man on the bench rises and waits for JOHN D. and EMMA to pass him.)*

JOHN D. If it isn't the Indian missionary himself.

JACOB. Don't tell me the Lord has blessed you with yet another wife, John D.  
 JOHN D. Emma—Jacob Hamblin. Jacob—Emma. She'll be mine after lunch, soon as we're back from the Endowment House.

JACOB. They get purtier each time you take one to the altar, John D. But then you have an experienced eye, and young innocents seem fascinated by gray hair.

EMMA. It depends on who's wearing it, Mr. Hamblin. You'd need to be far grayer than John D. before you'd ever turn my head.

*(They all laugh good naturedly.)*

JOHN D. Left you speechless for once, didn't she, Jacob?

JACOB. *(Still eyeing EMMA.)* They not only get purtier—but more sassy. You'll have to take a switch to this one, John D.

EMMA. He'd better not.

JOHN D. And I won't.

JACOB. Then you'll spoil her.

JOHN D. She can't spoil, Jacob. She came here pushing a handcart.

JACOB. That ain't so unusual.

JOHN D. In the Martin Company . . . and lived to tell about it . . . with all her "purty" toes intact.

EMMA. John!

JOHN D. Or so she tells me.

JACOB. But how did you manage? Most of the survivors were crippled by frostbite.

JOHN D. She's spunky, Jacob. She took her shoes off every stream she crossed so they wouldn't get wet and freeze her feet. And she saved a young boy by carrying him on her back at every crossing. She also tended the sisters who gave birth. Says it kept her moving about, and she didn't get so cold that way.

EMMA. Or have time to feel sorry for myself.

JACOB. That's mighty impressive, Sister . . .

EMMA. Batchelor. But you can forget that, Brother Hamblin, because the next time you see me, it will be Sister John D. Lee.

JACOB. Number seventeen.

EMMA. That's right—and proud of my seventeenth share in all his silver gray hairs. Especially after everything Brother Brigham just told me. Why, did you know, Brother Hamblin, that if it hadn't been for my future husband, the Nauvoo Temple might not have been finished in time for the Saints to take out their endowments? And that he was Brother Brigham's chief provisioner during the entire westward trek?

JACOB. He knows how to buy and sell, John D. does.

EMMA. And raised three thousand bushels of corn at Winter Quarters for the Saints who would follow. Why didn't you tell me any of this before, dear?

JACOB. Oh, he's too modest for that. Ain't you, John D.? If someone like me don't tell you, you'll probably never find out how he led the cotton expedition to "Dixie" and explored the Virgin River and Santa Clara.

EMMA. You did all of that, John D.? *(She squeezes his arm.)*

JOHN D. Only after I'd diverted the Jordan River into Great Salt Lake. That was with my one hand. And chopped the wagon trail from Echo to Emigration Canyon with the other.

*(JOHN D. and EMMA giggle.)*

JACOB. Now you know why he's such a favorite with Brother Brigham. Always manages to get the credit—not take it, mind you—just get it.

EMMA. *(Sharply.)* Anything more I should know about John D., Brother Hamblin?

JACOB. Oh, sure. Plenty more. Even a few things he'd rather you didn't know.

EMMA. Why, what do you mean?

JACOB. I mustn't spoil your wedding.

EMMA. Brother Hamblin. It will take more than your innuendoes to shake my confidence in John D. See, he hasn't even bothered to answer you.

JACOB. That's 'cause he don't know how.

JOHN D. How's your new bride, Jacob?

JACOB. Priscilla's just fine, thank you.

JOHN D. You took her to the Endowment House, when was it, some time in early September?

JACOB. You have a good memory.

JOHN D. I have reason to. It was a convenient time to be gone, wasn't it? Just after you'd brought our Indian chiefs to Brother Brigham—to fire them up about Johnston's Army?

JACOB. I couldn't have foreseen that.

JOHN D. I couldn't have either, Jacob. You know that, don't you?

JACOB. I only know what I see, John D.—and sometimes what I hear.

SECRETARY. Please, Brother Hamblin. The President is waiting.

JACOB. Excuse me then. And my congratulations.

JOHN D. Thank you, Jacob.

EMMA. From both of us.

JACOB. *(Without smiling.)* Of course.

*(He opens the upstage door, faces the inner office, and smiles broadly.)*

At your service, Brother Brigham.

(JACOB closes the door behind him. JOHN D. and EMMA move away from the SECRETARY and turn, as if into a corridor, then come face to face with a distinguished looking older gentleman, GEORGE ALBERT SMITH.)

SMITH. Well, John D.—and who's this with you?

JOHN D. My new wife-to-be, Brother Smith. Emma—Apostle Smith.

SMITH. From the look on Emma's face you must have just received the President's stamp of approval.

JOHN D. That we did. And he also told Emma she had a great mission to perform. "A very great mission."

SMITH. Remarkable, Emma. The President doesn't make such statements lightly—and rarely to the sisters.

JOHN D. True. He hasn't spoken like that to any of the others.

SMITH. I'm sure you know the man you're getting in turn.

EMMA. I've had a strong confirmation, Brother Smith.

SMITH. Did he tell you he helped me lead the mission to Iron County? I asked Brother Brigham especially for him. And he's doing a great work right now—teaching the Lamanites how to plant and cultivate, taming them along with their crops.

JOHN D. Now, George Albert, more praise like that and she might just change her mind about marrying me.

SMITH. Why so?

JOHN D. She won't believe it.

SMITH. Forgive me, Sister Emma. It's just the preacher in me. Hard to contain.

JOHN D. Which reminds me, George Albert—are you still riling up the Saints about Johnston's Army?

SMITH. Got to, John D., as long as it's a threat. How, by the way, are the Indians down your way?

JOHN D. Now that it's colder, they're minding their own business. You can ask Jacob when he comes out. He's in there now with Brother Brigham.

SMITH. You say, it's gone better since September?

JOHN D. Since it's got colder, I said. That would be, yes, since late September.

SMITH. Well, may the Lord's choicest blessings attend you both. I'll visit down South again in spring—before we have to tangle with federal troops.

JOHN D. Be sure you visit us after you get to Cedar.

SMITH. I will, John. And if later we need extra teams—to evacuate the city . . .

JOHN D. I'll have them for you, George Albert. As many as you need. I acquired new ones before it got so cold.

SMITH. In September?

JOHN D. Yes . . . in September. They're at your and Brother Brigham's disposal. SMITH. Thank you, John. Good day, Sister Emma.

(SMITH tips his hat and leaves.)

EMMA. What's all this talk about last September, John?

JOHN D. It's nothing, Emma. Just a little trouble the Indians gave some Gentiles that were passing through.

EMMA. Oh, yes. I remember now.

JOHN D. Remember? Remember what?

EMMA. Oh, nothing.

JOHN D. You're sure?

EMMA. Quite sure, dear.

JOHN D. It didn't affect the Saints much, thank heaven. I'll tell you about it sometime. But not right now. Today's especially set apart for you and me.

EMMA. (Taking his arm and beaming at him.) The most important day of my life, John D. Lee!

JOHN D. How young I feel again—young and innocent—with you by my side.

EMMA. How secure and strong I am with your arm around me.

JOHN D. Emma, if you were my only wife, you couldn't be more special.

EMMA. I couldn't imagine ever marrying anyone besides you, John D. That's why I'm willing to share you with the others.

JOHN D. You're sure of that?

EMMA. Quite sure.

JOHN D. I still can't understand why the Lord blessed me so—what made a young beauty like you fall in love with an old man like me?

EMMA. I knew it when I first laid eyes on you—that night in Salt Lake, at the meeting. I knew you were the one for me as soon as you started to pray. I wondered how long it would take before you saw me in the audience.

JOHN D. But you never seemed to look up. I could tell you knew I was smiling at you, but you wouldn't look up. And when it was over, you ran away.

EMMA. I guess I was a little scared. And I figured that, if you really wanted to, you could find me.

JOHN D. And I did, heaven be praised. (He kisses her.) How I love you.

Now let's go tell the Lord and seek his benediction.

EMMA. His eternal benediction, John D.

JOHN D. That's right, my dear, for now and ever after. (They go offstage.)



ACT ONE  
Scene Two

*The lights dim, then come up on RACHEL, as in the PROLOGUE.*

RACHEL. You had no real idea what trouble the Indians had given us, my dear.

John wanted to spare you that as long as he could. Just the week before the massacre—on a Sunday evening—they met in Cedar City.

EMMA. *(Rejoining her, in the cloak she wore in the PROLOGUE.)* They?

RACHEL. The brethren in the militia.

ACT ONE  
Scene Three

*September 6, 1857. Cedar City, Utah. Evening. A candlelit council room in the Cedar church house. Several men, including MILES PACE, enter the room. Others have already seated themselves at a large oak table. There are about ten men in all.*

MILES. Is this a meeting of the high council or the militia?

LEWIS. It don't matter. We're the same body. Just change hats, and go by a different name.

HAIGHT. *(Calling out.)* Brethren, please be seated. This, as you know, is an emergency session. We have urgent business.

*(The others take their places.)*

HAIGHT. The entire territory is now under martial law. President Young—

DAME. Colonel Haight, this is a military, not a Church, meeting.

HAIGHT. Yes, of course, Colonel Dame. Governor Young, that is, has advised us that the federal expeditionary forces, numbering some 2,500 troops, are already in Nebraska and, at the most, another month away. We may be facing a war of extermination. We must make full use of every resource at our command. Our food stores must be held in reserve for the ordeal ahead. And above all, the Lamanites must remain our allies. Which leads me to invite Colonel Dame, our first in command, to detail the circumstances under which we and they now stand. Colonel Dame.

DAME. You know how these latest emigrants have roused the Lamanites.

MILES. They're so riled, they've begun to raid our settlements!

LEWIS. Don't forget, they outnumber us, four to one!

HAIGHT. Colonel Dame has the floor, gentlemen. But allow me to remind him—remind you all—of the letter Governor Young sent just last month to Jacob Hamblin. Here, I made a copy: "You are hereby appointed to succeed Elder R. C. Allen as President of the Santa Clara Indian Mission. Continue the

conciliatory policy toward the Indians, which I have ever recommended, and seek by works of righteousness to obtain their love and confidence, for they must learn that they have either got to help us or the United States will kill us both."

DAME. The point is, with these émigrés' recent harassment, the Lamanites are sure to retaliate and take it out on us, too, unless we prove we're with them.

LOTT. "Émigrés," you call them, Colonel. But they're not just ordinary émigrés. They call themselves "Missouri Wildcats."

DAME. Some of their younger men, anyway.

MILES. That's right. Some claim they were in the mob that killed the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum. Others have threatened to come back and get Brother Brigham.

LOTT. *(Standing.)* I lived with the Prophet in Missouri. I witnessed his suffering, the tarring and feathering, and other persecutions. There we endured—not for a good name among men, but because it was required of us by the good Father in Heaven. There we were driven, robbed, and murdered. But now they're on our territory, and I hope before I die to see these damnable rebels make restitution, to see their children suffer for the wickedness of their fathers, so the blood of the martyrs will be avenged.

MILES. Let's not forget the Haun's Mill massacre. That was in Missouri too.

DAME. Half the party is from Arkansas.

LEWIS. They're no better than Missourians. Wasn't Apostle Pratt stabbed to death there earlier this year—in Arkansas?

MILES. I'm with Brother Lott. That day in Nauvoo when they brought back Joseph's and Hyrum's bodies, when I saw their beloved forms reposing in the arms of death, I was overcome. I then and there resolved I would never let an opportunity pass to avenge their blood upon the heads of the Church's enemies.

DAME. Be seated. All of you! If this were a priesthood meeting, Brother Pace, that kind of talk would hardly be in order.

HAIGHT. Just so we don't minimize the danger, Colonel Dame. The Wildcats have sworn that when Johnston's Army descends on us from the east, they'll return from California and kill every Mormon in Utah.

*(The others gasp.)*

I move the following resolution: That where the Indians and these Missouri mobocrats—the Fancher wagon train—are concerned, we deal with the situation now, so that our hands will be free to meet the Army when it comes. Do I hear any objections?



MORRILL. Brother Haight . . .

HAIGHT. Colonel Haight!

MORRILL. Before I can support your resolution, I must know exactly what you mean by "dealing with the situation."

HAIGHT. Why, at least to arrest and punish the offenders—and let the Indians know whose side we're on.

MILES. That way we'll only end up sacrificing men to guard them and food to keep them alive and be none the better off. Do away with them, I say.

LOTT. I'm for that.

LEWIS. I'm with you, Brother Pace.

HAIGHT. (*Turning to DAME.*) Now you see how it lies, don't you, Colonel?

DAME. I see how impulsive you all are. But since I'm first in command—the one who will be responsible if anything goes wrong—I'm going to recommend that, before we do anything more, we dispatch an express messenger to Brigham Young for further instructions.

HAIGHT. I have just this much more to say: When the Missourians drove us out, Haun's Mill was our answer, and when we asked for bread, they gave us a stone. We left the confines of civilization and came far into the wilderness where we could worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience and without annoyance to our neighbors. We resolved that if they would leave us alone we would never trouble them. But the Gentiles will not leave us alone. They still abuse us, and at this very moment their army is advancing toward our valleys, bent on our extermination. Well, I have been driven from my home for the last time, and I am prepared to feed the Gentiles the same bread they fed us. God being my helper, I will give my last drop of blood in defense of Zion.

LOTT. Hear! Hear!

MILES. Amen!

#### ACT ONE

#### Scene Four

*September 11, 1857. Mountain Meadows. The steady beat of a tom-tom hangs over the scene, occasionally punctuated by a rifle shot, a war whoop, or a distant scream.* JOHN D. crouches on the ground, conferring with three others—HIGBEE, KLINGENSMITH, and JOHNSON.

JOHNSON. That was chicken of you, John D.—getting us to come here by pretending they was already massacred, an' you needed grave diggers.

JOHN D. Is that how they put it to you, Nephi?

JOHNSON. That's how they put it.

JOHN D. Well, if that's what it took to get you here, I can't say I'm sorry.

HIGBEE. We need to see eye to eye about handling all those braves out there—how many hundred are there, John D.?

JOHN D. Four, maybe six.

HIGBEE. —and then act on what we decide.

KLINGENSMITH. And act fast. They won't hold back much longer. How many'd you say they've already killed?

JOHN D. At least seven. And the Missourians have shot as many of them. That's why they're so whoopin' mad. Chief Kanosh says they were promised that if they would fight for the Mormons, the Mormon God would protect them from the emigrants' bullets. Now he says we must either help avenge their casualties or pay for their losses with our own men.

KLINGENSMITH. But the Indians aren't fighting for us. We didn't ask them to start this one.

JOHN D. I know. I've told them that. I've pled with them. So now they call me Yawgetts.

HIGBEE. Yawgetts?

JOHN D. "Crybaby." So what are we going to do? Major Higbee? You're closer to Colonel Haight than I am. You're his son-in-law and his first counselor. You've seen him more recently. Since your arrival you're as much in charge here as I am.

HIGBEE. What did Colonel Dame say in the message he sent you?

JOHN D. He sent it to Colonel Haight, and Haight forwarded it to me through you. Didn't you discuss it with him?

HIGBEE. No. What does it say?

JOHN D. (*Handing HIGBEE a piece of paper.*) Here. Read it for yourself.

HIGBEE. (*Reading aloud.*) "Compromise with the Indians if possible by letting them take all the stock and let the company alone, but on no condition precipitate a war with them while there is an army marching against our people. As Indian Farmer and Major in the Legion, I trust you will have influence enough to restrain them and save the company. If that is impossible, save the women and children at all hazards. Signed—William H. Dame, Colonel and Commander, Iron Military District."

(*The sound of a shot, followed by a man's piercing scream.*)

HIGBEE. What was that?

(*Another member of the militia rushes in.*)

HIGBEE. What is it, Brother Knight?

KNIGHT. The man who just screamed—he was a Missourian. He and two others

all of a sudden left their wagons, leaped onto their horses, and headed toward us. One of our men gunned him down, and the braves finished him off.

HIGBEE. One of ours gunned him down, you say?

KNIGHT. He thought they figured we were Indians and were about to attack us.

HIGBEE. Three men? And the other two?

KNIGHT. Got away. Headed west.

KLINGENSMITH. Do you think they saw who it was shot their man down, Sam?

Could they tell it were no Indian?

KNIGHT. About that—I couldn't say. They was going so fast, and from where they came, we was in the shadows.

KLINGENSMITH. We've got to do something.

JOHNSON. You got us into this mess, Major Lee. Now why don't you suggest what we ought to do?

JOHN D. Have you any orders, Major Higbee?

HIGBEE. So you want me to speak first, do you?

JOHN D. It's your privilege, Major.

HIGBEE. All right. Then my orders to you are that the Missourians should at least be decoyed out and disarmed in some manner, the best way you can.

JOHN D. Decoyed? The best way I can?

HIGBEE. You and those you ask to help you. If you want orders, then my orders, Major, are to use your own initiative.

JOHN D. I see.

(JOHN D. looks at the others, each in turn. When he begins to speak, he does so with almost mechanical deliberation.) All right. I'll talk to them. I'll tell them we can guarantee them safe passage only—if they agree to surrender and let us escort them. I'll tell them to put their weapons and the young children—those under ten—in one of the wagons. Have one of our men be their driver—say, Sam McMurdy. (To KNIGHT.) And you, Brother Knight, drive another wagon right behind that one with their wounded. Have the women and older children follow the wagons. Leave a space. And have their men come behind in single file. There are enough of us to accompany each man, one-on-one. That, we'll tell them, is to reassure the Indians that the Gentiles won't put up any more fight and also be a sign to the Indians that we aim to protect them. We'll head through the meadow north toward Cedar, in the direction of Hamblin's ranch. I'll lead out—with a white flag. Then I'll signal with these words: "Halt! Do your duty!" And each one of our men—you'll so inform them, Major?

(HIGBEE nods.)

—each one of our men will fire his piece at the man next to him. If anyone is too faint-hearted, he can duck down and shoot into the air instead. We won't touch the women and children, you understand.

HIGBEE. That's right. But they'll still be there across from the Indians where the canyon narrows.

JOHN D. (Eyeing HIGBEE.) I guess they will. Well, Major, is that a proper decoy?

HIGBEE. I . . . have no objections.

JOHN D. Does anyone else have an objection? Then we all see this, I take it, as our needful duty. You're all with me then? . . . You don't say, "Yes." You don't say, "No." . . . I'll go talk to the émigrés. (He leaves.)

# ACT ONE

## Scene Five

*Mountain Meadows. Early the next morning. HAIGHT and DAME in military uniform move to stage center, staring about them. They look weary and sad.*

DAME. Horrible! Horrible!

HAIGHT. Horrible enough, but you should have thought of that before you issued the orders.

DAME. I didn't think there were so many—not just the men, but all those women and children.

HAIGHT. It's a little late for your regrets now. The fact is, it's done. And by your orders. Now what do we do?

DAME. We must report this matter to the authorities.

HAIGHT. How will you report it?

DAME. I will report it just as it is.

HAIGHT. And implicate yourself with the rest?

DAME. No. I will not implicate myself, for I had nothing to do with it.

HAIGHT. (Suddenly furious.) That will not do, Colonel Dame. You know that you issued the orders to wipe out these people, and you cannot deny it! Nothing has been done except by your orders, and it is too late in the day for you to go back on the men who carried them out. If you think you can shift the blame for this onto me, you're wrong. I did nothing except what you ordered. And I will not be lied on. You'll stand up to your orders like a man, or I'll send you to hell cross lots! You cannot sow pig on me!

(JOHN D. and JOHNSON have meanwhile appeared, approaching the other two.)

JOHN D. Brethren, what's the trouble here?

HAIGHT. The trouble is this, Major Lee: Colonel Dame ordered us to do this

thing, and now he wants to back out and lay it all on me. He cannot do it! He shall not do it! I shall blow him to hell before he shall lay it all on me! He has got to stand up to what he did like a man. He knows he ordered it done, and I dare him to deny it.

DAME. Isaac, I did not know there were so many of them.

HAIGHT. That makes no difference. You ordered it done, and you have got to stand up for your orders.

JOHN D. Come, brethren, this will get us nowhere. The deed is done. Now how do we proceed? We will need to round up the men and prepare a mass grave. That will take a couple of days. Meanwhile, I suggest you assign two men to each wagon to catch a team and hitch it up and drive the wagons in a train back to Cedar, as we talked of earlier. See, the sun is up—time for action, not contention. We can hold another council later to decide upon a report. (HIGBEE runs in with a letter, which he quickly hands to DAME.)

HIGBEE. One of my men just intercepted a courier with this letter. It's for you—from Governor Young.

DAME. (Quickly opening the letter, then reading it aloud.) "Elder William Dame: Dear Brother—In regard to the emigration trains passing through our settlements, we must not interfere with them. The Indians we expect will do as they please, but you should try and preserve good feelings with them. The emigrants must be protected if it takes all the men in southern Utah. May the Lord bless you and all the Saints forever. Your brother in the gospel of Christ. Brigham Young."

(The men stare at one another. DAME moves aside with HAIGHT. They briefly whisper together, then return to the others.)

DAME. Men, I would like you to listen to Colonel Haight. Colonel.

HAIGHT. We have been privileged to avenge the blood of the prophets, but not perhaps for the last time. When Johnston's Army marches upon us, we will likely be called upon to fight again, though under somewhat different circumstances. We should not talk of what happened here yesterday, not to anyone, not even to our wives. Nor should we discuss it among ourselves. We should blot it from our memories and leave God to accept our actions in light of our loyalty to His cause and the establishment of His kingdom on earth. And now, Colonel Dame and I feel that for this resolve to impress itself the more fully on our minds, we here should face one another and make an oath to that effect. So come forward now and face the two of us. (The others do so.)

Now raise your arms.

(The others raise their arms as the lights fade.)

ACT ONE  
Scene Six

The next day. JOHN D.'s cabin at New Harmony. AGGATHA, RACHEL, and MARY ANN are setting a table. A knock on the door. RACHEL answers it, admitting MILES.

MILES. They're on their way, Rachel. Left Cedar an hour ago.

RACHEL. She gave us no warning whatever. We had to send for John D. in the middle of the night, still down south with President Haight and Brother Dame. And now I'm expected to serve them a grandiose meal with just a half-day's notice.

MARY ANN. Aunt Aggatha. Don't you think he was expecting her all along?

AGGATHA. I'm certain he'd already issued her a general invitation. It's just like him to keep it to himself and not tell us till the last minute.

RACHEL. If he arranged this visit, then they're sure to get married. So look alive, Mary Ann. Cleave to him while you still have the chance and he the inclination. She may lure him away forever with her cockney accent.

MARY ANN. No . . . No. I'm still not ready. Excuse me.

(She exits to an inner room.)

MILES. Think he'll tell her?

AGGATHA. Tell who?

MILES. The English girl. About what them Indians done at the Meadows?

AGGATHA. Why should he? He was sent there and had to witness the massacre. That's all. He arrived too late or else the Indians weren't in a frame of mind to let him intervene. Whichever way, it comes to the same thing. He couldn't help what happened. So what he wants to tell her—her or anyone else—is strictly his business.

MILES. I only wish I could have been there with him. That's all. If I hadn't come down with the flu again after last Sunday's meeting, I'd have gone with him. You can be sure. Nothing would have stopped me from getting a few licks in along with him. And afterward I'd have been proud to tell folks about it.

AGGATHA. Miles! John D. gave them no licks. It was all the Indians' doing. Now don't you forget that!

(From outdoors—the sound of horses whinnying and the creak of a carriage.)

MILES. That must be them now!

(He opens the door and goes outside.)

RACHEL. Now we'll see what she's really like—the little impertinence!

JOHN D. (From outdoors.) Miles, good to see you! Emma—my good friend, Miles Pace.

(JOHN D., EMMA, and MILES come through the door.)  
 JOHN D. Aggatha, Rachel—this is Emma Batchelor.  
 (*The women give EMMA a perfunctory kiss.*)  
 AGGATHA. I take it, my dear, that you don't intend to remain a bachelor.  
 (*All laugh, EMMA and RACHEL—self-consciously.*)  
 MILES. (*Still guffawing.*) That was a good one, Aggatha!  
 (*The others have stopped laughing.*)  
 MILES. (*Coming to.*) Well, I'd better be getting along—so's you can all be by yourselves. One big happy family, so to speak.  
 RACHEL. (*Reprovingly.*) Miles!  
 JOHN D. That's enough, Miles. Don't rush Sister Batchelor so. Why, she hasn't even sat down yet. You make her feel at home, ladies, while I walk Miles to the corral.  
 RACHEL. Don't be gone too long, John D. Supper's waiting.  
 (*JOHN D. waves acknowledgment and exits with MILES.*)  
 EMMA. How wonderful it all smells!  
 AGGATHA. Rachel's cooking, you mean?  
 EMMA. The air—out there on the heath.  
 RACHEL. (*Scoffing.*) That desert air?  
 EMMA. What's that lovely bloom that clumps here and there in leaping tongues like a miniature bonfire—so fiery red it is. Blood red even.  
 AGGATHA. You must mean the Indian Paint Brush.  
 EMMA. It's lovely.  
 RACHEL. You'll soon enough get used to that blood red. Real blood even from time to time.  
 AGGATHA. John is fond of the Paint Brush, too. When he first saw it he quoted Jeremiah: "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones."  
 EMMA. Fire in the bones? That's a strange expression.  
 AGGATHA. It fits John, though. When he sets his mind on a task, it's as if the elements were conspiring within him. There's no dissuading him—but tell us something about yourself, Emma.  
 RACHEL. Yes, what's the high life like these days in Salt Lake City?  
 EMMA. I wouldn't know much about the "high life," Sister Lee—except for what I may have had a glimpse of, secondhand. As soon as I recovered from the trek across the plains, they sent me to a house where the wife enjoyed poor health. And I mean enjoyed! Sit in her wrapper, follow me with her eyes, complain about everything I did. Her husband always trying to maul and claw at me. So I left, and he complained to the bishop. But I told the bishop I would work and earn my keep, but I would not do it in that house. So they

transferred me to Father Rollins' place. And that's how I met John D. Before we ever exchanged one word, I knew he was for me.  
 (*The other women trade looks. RACHEL busies herself at the table.*)  
 AGGATHA. Has he proposed, my dear?  
 EMMA. Why, yes. I think he fell in love with me through my cooking.  
 (*RACHEL bangs a plate.*)  
 You mean he didn't tell you? I came here at his request.  
 RACHEL. To look the rest of us over?  
 EMMA. To see how he runs his household, and if you'd all approve of me.  
 (*RACHEL impatiently exits to an inner room.*)  
 Oh, dear . . .  
 AGGATHA. How do you feel about plural marriage, my child—and getting along with all of us? A pretty girl like you must have had plenty of chances to marry a man more nearly her own age.  
 EMMA. I'd rather bear children to John D., though he had other wives, than be the only wife of an inferior man.  
 AGGATHA. I hope you understand the Principle well enough, my dear. There have been others who later found out it wasn't for them.  
 EMMA. How about Mary Ann? His latest?  
 AGGATHA. Mary Ann's an orphan. John D. took her on to give her a home—the way he did Mother. She doesn't love him—not in *that* way. She's really in love with my oldest son, Alma.  
 EMMA. What will she do?  
 AGGATHA. That will be up to John D. We'll just have to wait and see. It's all part of a pattern, my dear. You can't fight the Principle. You must give yourself to it or it's best you never come near it. A polygamous wife—a Mormon wife, for that matter—must keep her place. Her first and chief business is to respect her husband's priesthood and love him so completely that she doesn't question him—making his will her law. She must also teach her children the proper honor and respect due their father. For his part, he must treat his wives with kindness and tenderness but not allow them to sway his decisions or dissuade him from his duty. Brother Brigham scorns any man who doesn't hold himself above a woman's whims or who bends to a wife's will.  
 EMMA. I see.  
 AGGATHA. Do you suppose you can be happy with such a man? Because that's the kind of man our husband is. One of the best.  
 EMMA. I know I must seem rather too spunky. Too impatient. Too quick to do or say some things. I'm like that. And I have a terrible temper. But it's

a little like a match set to rabbitbrush—one quick sputter and it's out, without heat enough to start a flame anywhere else. I'd still like the chance to prove myself—to him and to the rest of you.

AGGATHA. How will you take to the work? There's wool to wash, pull, card, and spin into yarn to knit. There's wood to cut and pick up, candles and soap to make. The gardening. This isn't Salt Lake City.

EMMA. I'm still willing.

AGGATHA. You crossed the plains with the Martin Company, didn't you?

(EMMA nods.)

Then I think you'll be equal to life in New Harmony and all that may yet lie ahead. I can already tell that you, not Rachel, will someday take my place.

EMMA. Why, what do you mean?

AGGATHA. (*Handing her a bound notebook.*) Here. Now don't argue. This is the journal John D. has asked me to keep for his wives. When you join us I'm going to turn it over to you. That will be one of your duties.

EMMA. (*Opening the journal.*) Is this the latest entry?

AGGATHA. It is.

EMMA. (*Reading.*) "This morning a great number of Indians returned from the Southwest. Also Brother John D. Lee." What was that about?

AGGATHA. Never mind.

EMMA. "We also have another mouth to feed—a baby boy. We don't know who his parents are and haven't yet decided what to call him." But where did you find him?

AGGATHA. Don't ask.

EMMA. "Have spent the morning sorting and arranging by size various pairs of shoes—men's, women's, and children's. Also quilts and blankets, cooking utensils, dishes, and some clothing. The skirts and dresses were bloody and had to be soaked in many waters, washed in suds, and ironed for wear. Some of the wives became nauseated or turned faint but remained tight-lipped. We expect more such work during the next couple of days."

AGGATHA. Question?

EMMA. Does it . . . have something to do with those Indians?

(AGGATHA nods.)

EMMA. Then . . . no. I guess not.

AGGATHA. (*Extending her arms.*) Emma, I think you'll manage well enough as John D.'s seventeenth wife.

(EMMA rushes into her embrace.)

EMMA. Thank you, dear Sister Lee.

AGGATHA. Aggatha.

EMMA. Aggatha.

(*RACHEL enters with a tray of food.*)

AGGATHA. Oh, John D. What is it about you that attracts women so?

RACHEL. Too big for just one or two of us to hold him. But what's keeping him? (*Good naturedly.*) If my food gets much colder, it won't begin to compete with yours, Emma—though I dare say I've had a lot more practice and been trying to satisfy him a lot longer than you.

(*JOHN D. returns with ALMA.*)

ALMA. Good day, Mother. Aunt Rachel.

AGGATHA. Good day, Alma.

JOHN D. Supper ready, my dear?

RACHEL. It's been long ready.

JOHN D. Then we must quickly wash up. The pump's just outside. This way, Emma.

(*JOHN D. and EMMA go outside.*)

ALMA. Is she here?

AGGATHA. (*Going to the inner door.*) Mary Ann?

(*MARY ANN appears, then blushes at the sight of ALMA.*)

RACHEL. We're about to eat, Mary Ann.

MARY ANN. I'm not hungry.

ALMA. I'm not either . . .

AGGATHA. We'll excuse you.

MARY ANN. Say I don't feel well.

ALMA. Tell him I'm not through milking.

AGGATHA. Go out the back way. But be quick.

(*ALMA and MARY ANN exit through the inner door.*)

RACHEL. Do you think John D. will ever give her up?

AGGATHA. When he knows how Alma feels about her, I think he will.

RACHEL. And how will Emma work out?

AGGATHA. Just fine.

RACHEL. And when she finds out? About what happened this week?

AGGATHA. It will be public knowledge, won't it?

RACHEL. That's not what I mean. I mean, the rest. What the public, what none of us will ever be told. How will she take that?

AGGATHA. Don't worry, my dear. Emma already knows.

ACT ONE  
Scene Seven

*That night. Mountain Meadows. The stage in shadows.*

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE. *(From offstage.)* Jacob, please don't leave me!

JACOB. *(Coming onstage from the same direction.)* Don't worry, sweet! I'll only be a minute! I've just got to check on something. You stay in the wagon like I told you now. Understand? That way you'll be perfectly safe.

WOMAN'S VOICE. Please hurry, Jacob! Remember, this is our honeymoon. And I miss you whenever you leave my sight!

JACOB. I'll be right back, sweet!

*(He begins to look around the stage, bends down, then stands back in amazement, continues walking, stops and seems startled, probes something lying on the ground with his foot. His expression shows mounting shock and revulsion. He moves offstage in the opposite direction, still peering about him, as in a daze. A long pause.*

*A young woman, PRISCILLA HAMBLIN, appears, barefoot, in a nightgown.)*

PRISCILLA. *(Unable to see in front of her, calling timidly.)* Jacob? Jacob?

*(PRISCILLA suddenly appears to trip, lurches, falls, then, noticing what is beneath her, jumps back and screams hysterically. JACOB quickly returns and takes her in his arms. She continues to scream.)*

JACOB. I thought I told you to stay inside the wagon!

PRISCILLA. Jacob, what . . . who is that? It's a woman, isn't it? Is she dead?

JACOB. Yes, dead.

PRISCILLA. And over there *(becoming hysterical again)*—is that another?

JACOB. Quit looking, Priscilla. Close your eyes. I'll lead you back to the wagon.

PRISCILLA. Jacob, what is this? How many are there?

JACOB. Don't ask.

PRISCILLA. What is this?

JACOB. It's folly, that's what it is. It's John D. Lee's folly. Brigham's favorite! But it's also partly my fault.

PRISCILLA. Yours?

JACOB. Yes, mine. If I'd been here, I could have stopped it.

PRISCILLA. You mean, if I hadn't met you . . . if we hadn't gotten married—

JACOB. No, I don't mean that. I don't reproach you, sweet, or our marriage. Perish the thought. But you must do one thing, Priscilla.

PRISCILLA. Yes, Jacob?

JACOB. You must keep your eyes closed. You must always keep them so.

PRISCILLA. What do you mean?

JACOB. Closed to what you saw here—what I said just now, and what you may think about it.

PRISCILLA. But why, Jacob?

JACOB. Don't ask, Priscilla. Just trust me.

PRISCILLA. I will.

JACOB. You promise?

PRISCILLA. I promise.

*(She leans against him, her eyes still closed. He assists her offstage in the direction from which they came. The lights dim.)*

ACT TWO  
Scene One

October 1870. Skutumpah in the Kaibab Forest, Northern Arizona. Late at night. EMMA sits at a crude desk, writing a letter. Lying on the desk is the journal AGGATHA gave her in ACT ONE, Scene Six.

EMMA. *(As she writes, dictating her thoughts.)* Dearest Rachel! Winter has come early. It came so suddenly that the lovely fall flowers hardly had a chance to bloom. My favorite—the Indian Paint Brush—didn't last long at all. So, with the weather so cold, there's not much to do right now—especially with John D. away. He went to visit the wives at Washington a week ago. Should have been back by now. But how did you and your family fare this past year in Panguitch? We think of you often—also of Mary Ann and Alma. I've only seen their oldest three children. John D.'s awfully anxious to see you all again. Luckily, John D. adjusts well to different kinds of work. The sawmill may even make a profit for us if in a few years Brother Brigham doesn't send us somewhere else. John D.'s gone partners with Brother Hamblin. John D.'s also explored the site for a ferry not far from here on the Colorado. I said to him it was the loneliest dell I had ever seen. And then and there he named it "Lonely Dell." I suppose if the federal agents get too inquisitive again, and if Brother Brigham still wants us to keep out of their sight, we can always go to that forlorn spot and run the ferry and never fear they'd bother us again. How times have changed since we were all together in New Harmony—or at the mansion house in Washington County. Remember how everyone celebrated when John D. built the mill there—the dinners we served sometimes eighty or more people, the afternoon sports, and the dancing till two in the morning? But then, folks became contentious—just like they had at New Harmony. Started whispering about him and the Indians, turned their cattle into his fields, plugged his ditches, slandered us all. I still think they were mostly

jealous because John D. knew how to manage so well. When he sat in priesthood courts, he generally pled for leniency. He was always prompt to pay his tithes. He donated as much as all the rest of Harmony to bring poor Saints across the plains, but that didn't seem to help. I remember well the day he was released as bishop—folks said they just didn't like him. Earlier, you remember, he was asked to resign as probate judge. Martha and the two Marys—have left him. Teressa and Ann are wavering, and Polly and Lavina have preferred to stay on in Washington, as, I suppose, they must. How glad I am that, if it was her time to go, Aggatha was spared most all this when she passed on three years ago. Through it all John D. remains steadfastly loyal to Brother Brigham. How many times we've entertained President Young and the other brethren on their trips South. And they remember us. They understand. (*Referring to the journal.*) Here's a notation from just last February: "Brother Brigham made a tour to the southern outposts. Having business there, Brother Lee intercepted him at Beaver, where he was warmly greeted and invited to join the procession next day in St. George—the first time he'd been overlooked, but I'm sure that's all it was." Heavens! It can't be that old Indian business. They say Brother Brigham will be coming to Kanab this summer with the explorer Major Powell. I'm sure we'll see him then once more and right any misunderstanding.

(*A knock.*)

Who is it?

(*EMMA answers the door, admitting MILES.*)

EMMA. Miles! What are you doing here?

MILES. Polly and Lavina sent me. This letter came for John D. two days ago—from Bishop Carrington.

EMMA. Maybe I'd better open it?

MILES. As you like.

EMMA. (*Hesitating.*) You seem to know what's in it.

MILES. I think I do.

EMMA. What is it then?

(*She opens the letter.*)

What's this? (*Reading.*) "Mr. John D. Lee. You are hereby notified that on October 10 of this year of our Lord, 1870, action was taken"—oh heavens!—"which resulted in the forfeiture of your priesthood and membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Miles! This can't be! Why would you play such a joke on us?

MILES. It's not a joke, Emma. At least I don't think it is. But, if it's any consolation,

Isaac Haight was also excommunicated by the same court.

EMMA. President Haight? Whatever for?

MILES. For failure, they say, to restrain John D.

EMMA. Restrain? Restrain him from what? And what was John D.'s transgression?

It doesn't even say. Surely it has nothing to do with . . . with what happened so long ago at the Meadows?

MILES. I'd like to think not, Emma. But what else could it be?

EMMA. Where's John D., Miles? Have they already turned him in to the authorities?

MILES. I'm sure they haven't, Emma.

EMMA. He should have returned . . .

(*The door opens. JOHN D. enters.*)

. . . days ago.

JOHN D. Evening, Miles.

(*EMMA rushes tearfully into JOHN D.'s arms.*)

So you've heard.

EMMA. (*Nodding.*) But they let you come back.

JOHN D. They?

EMMA. Or you escaped.

JOHN D. Escaped? Escaped who?

EMMA. Whoever kept you away.

JOHN D. Now, now, Emma. It's not all that bad. No one kept me away. Soon as I got wind of it, I disguised myself, took my horse, and rode straight to Brother Brigham.

MILES. That's some fancy riding, John D. How long did you spend there?

JOHN D. Two, maybe three hours. Just long enough to speak to him.

EMMA. What did you say to him?

JOHN D. I asked him how it was that I'd been held in fellowship for thirteen years and all of a sudden must be cut off for something I was supposed to have done that long ago. Besides, if it's wrong now, it certainly wasn't then.

EMMA. What did he say to that?

JOHN D. He said he had never learned the particulars until lately. And I replied that the truth and the whole truth had been told to him back then—except for one thing: I had suffered the blame to rest on me, when it ought to have rested on persons whose names had never been brought out, and if any man had spoken the contrary, then that man had lied like hell. I declared my innocence of doing anything designedly wrong and that what I did was done by the mutual consent of those with me and those who gave us our orders—that we had all prayed over the matter diligently and sought the



mind and will of the Spirit of Truth to direct us. "My conscience is clear," I said, "and I know that I have a reward in heaven and desire a rehearing." If I were denied, I said, I would appeal to my Father in Heaven.

MILES. And what did he say then?

JOHN D. He said I could have a rehearing. He said he wanted me to be a man and not a baby and that he had no feelings against me. He said I could petition for a hearing from Erastus Snow.

EMMA. Will you?

JOHN D. I already have.

MILES. You went to St. George?

JOHN D. No. President Snow happened to be in Salt Lake just then, too. I left a letter where he was staying, stating my request.

MILES. Good for you, John D.!

JOHN D. I'd hoped folks wouldn't find out quite so soon. But Jacob already got word to me he's pulling out.

EMMA. Of the ranch?

JOHN D. And the sawmill.

EMMA. But why?

JOHN D. It's the same old business, Emma. You remember Nephi Stewart—how it ruined him financially once word got out he'd been cut off the Church?

EMMA. Then you'll have to find another partner.

JOHN D. No . . . I'm afraid there won't be another. Now nothing will ever be the same.

MILES. I'd join you, John D.! I swear, I would! If I had the means.

JOHN D. I know you would, Miles. At least as you are now—a poor dirt farmer like I'll be the rest of my days. But if you had the means—well, then I'm not so sure.

MILES. Why, John D.?

JOHN D. If you had more means, you wouldn't be the same Miles you are now. Just like I'm no longer the same John D. I once was. And, who knows, maybe we're both better off this way. What do you think, Emma?

EMMA. Tell me, John D. Tell me, if you can, did this . . . this decision come down from Brother Brigham?

JOHN D. Of course not! Brother Brigham would never desert me.

EMMA. You know that Isaac Haight was cut off too, don't you?

JOHN D. Yes, I know.

MILES. Then why wasn't William Dame?

JOHN D. Dame? Why, don't you remember? Haight, Higbee, Johnson, and

twenty others—mostly Dame's aides—signed a paper the very next year, in 1858, attesting that Dame's actions showed "the right spirit." That's as I recall how it read.

MILES. Haight signed such a paper?

JOHN D. Yes.

MILES. But why?

JOHN D. That's a mystery. Don't try to fathom it.

EMMA. When Brother Brigham told you to appeal to President Snow, John, did he . . . offer to do something himself . . . to put in a good word for you?

JOHN D. No. He didn't.

EMMA. (*Sputtering.*) But why, John? That's not right! Brother Brigham daren't treat you that way, and, if he doesn't know any better, then he'll soon enough have a piece of my mind, he will!

JOHN D. (*Laughing.*) Hush now, Emma. You're out of order.

EMMA. It's another mystery, eh?

JOHN D. No. Not really. I think I can figure this one out. You see, the apostates, especially the Godbeites, are trying to implicate Brother Brigham on the grounds he's keeping men in the Church who were involved at Mountain Meadows. So he has to stay out of it. As for me, my conscience is clear. I've done nothing with evil intent. If I erred, it was in judgment, not in my heart. The Prophet Joseph once said he would rather have every man on earth against him than be accused by his conscience. So it is with me. I would rather have a clear conscience than the smiles and good will of other men.

EMMA. (*Distraught.*) Oh, John.

JOHN D. My love for the truth is more important to me than anything else, and I believe that the truth will prevail. Brother Brigham is also confident that justice will be served. And if he is, so am I. President Snow is fair. He'll see to that, too. My prayer remains that God will bless us all with the intelligence of Heaven that we may ever discriminate between truth and error . . . Now, have either of you anything more to say?

EMMA. No, John D. . . .

JOHN D. Miles?

(MILES *shakes his head.*)

(*Moving to the door.*) Now, help me unhitch the horse, will you, Miles?

MILES. Of course, John D.

(JOHN D. *opens the door, then notices a piece of paper on the outer threshold. As he retrieves it, their attention is caught by the sound of receding hoofbeats.*)

EMMA. What is it, John D.?

JOHN D. An unsigned note. But I recognize the handwriting: "To John D. Lee! If you will consider your own safety and that of others at this time, then, lest you cause others to become accessory with you and thereby force them to inform upon you or to suffer, our advice is: Trust no one. Make yourself scarce."

EMMA. Who brought this here? Did you see the rider, John?

JOHN D. Yes.

MILES. It had to be one of Erastus' boys—looked like his next to oldest son.

EMMA. Will you . . . appeal then?

JOHN D. Let's unharness the horse, Miles.

MILES. Sure thing, John D.

*(They leave. EMMA looks after them, then moves to the desk, sits, and picks up her pen.)*

EMMA. Let's see. What have I written her? *(reading)* "Winter came so suddenly that the lovely fall flowers hardly had a chance to bloom. My favorite—the Indian Paint Brush—didn't last long at all." . . . I wonder what it will be like living at Lonely Dell . . .

*(The lights dim.)*

## ACT TWO Scene Two

*November 7, 1874. Panguitch, Utah. Early morning. Kitchen in the home of RACHEL, MARY ANN, and ALMA. MARY ANN nurses a new baby, while RACHEL stokes a stove and prepares breakfast. AGGATHA'S son, SAMMY, enters the room with a piece of mail.*

RACHEL. My, but you've been gone long, Sammy. Finish your chores yet?

SAMMY. Almost, Aunt Rachel. But, see here. Someone just delivered this. Said it arrived yesterday at the post office. *(He hands her the letter.)*

RACHEL. Why, it's from Emma again. Postmarked two weeks ago in Kanab.

MARY ANN. Maybe there's news in it about John D. It's been so long since we've heard from him.

RACHEL. *(Opening the letter.)* Let's see. *(Reading.)* "Dearest Rachel! John D. left Lonely Dell this morning to fetch supplies in St. George. But I feel certain he intends to visit the families in Washington and all of you in Panguitch before returning."

MARY ANN. So Father Lee may soon come see us again.

RACHEL. As right he should!

MARY ANN. Well, what do you say to that, Sammy?

SAMMY. That's great!

RACHEL. *(Still reading.)* "You know how dangerous it is for him to travel these

days with the new spate of arrests and all the trouble we're having over polygamy. Well, this afternoon, just hours after John D. left home, Miles Pace came by and said he'd heard a new marshal had left Salt Lake, especially on the prowl for John D.—not just on account of John's several families but having to do with those same old grievances that never seem to die. Miles said if the marshal gets as far as Kanab, John D. should plan to hide away farther down the Colorado, maybe stay with the Havasupai Indians for a while at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, and that he, Miles, would warn us in time. I wish he'd caught John D. before he left here. As you can see, it's especially dangerous for him to travel right now. So if he does come your way, urge him to be careful and have him return to Lonely Dell as quickly as he can—and travel only at night. Please congratulate Alma and Mary Ann on their new baby. Love, Emma."

MARY ANN. What had we better do, Rachel?

RACHEL. There's not much we *can* do until he shows up here. And I'm not so anxious as Emma. We're as good at hiding folks, if we have to, as she is at Lonely Dell. Besides, for some time now she's had John D. all to herself. We deserve our fair share of him.

SAMMY. Maybe she wrote that letter so he'd come right back to her.

RACHEL. I wouldn't put it past her, the impertinence!

MARY ANN. Aunt Rachel!

RACHEL. Heaven forgive me, but that's how I feel sometimes.

*(A knock.)*

MAN'S VOICE. Open up in there! This is the sheriff!

MARY ANN. Heavens!

RACHEL. Speak of the Antichrist! Quick, Sammy. *(Handing him the letter.)* Poke it in the stove.

MAN'S VOICE. Open up! I have a warrant!

RACHEL. Coming!

*(First making sure that SAMMY has destroyed the letter, she moves to the door, admitting two men in broad-brimmed western hats.)*

Why, it's Sheriff William Stokes.

STOKES. That's right, Rachel. And this here's Marshal Becker from Salt Lake.

BECKER. Where are your other rooms?

RACHEL. *(Pointing.)* In there.

*(The men move toward the other rooms. SAMMY starts to slip out.)*

RACHEL. *(In an anxious whisper.)* Sammy!

BECKER. Come back, you! I want everyone to stay right here.

(The men leave. As soon as they do, SAMMY completes his exit. RACHEL and MARY ANN exchange looks. The two men suddenly rush back into the room.)  
 BECKER. Where's the kid? What's he doing outside? (He rushes outdoors.)  
 STOKES. (Winking to the ladies.) Now jest be calm and everything will be all right.  
 (BECKER returns to the doorway, one arm around SAMMY's throat, his gun pointed at SAMMY's head)  
 BECKER. (In a loud voice.) Now tell me, kid, and tell me the truth—what were you doing near that log pen there with all the straw on it.  
 SAMMY. I . . . I was gonna chop some kindling.  
 BECKER. You was, was you? After I'd said stay in the house? Why? Jest to be ornery? Well? Cat got your tongue? (Calling outdoors.) Mr. Lee. Come on out and surrender yourself. I have come to arrest you. I said to come on out and surrender . . . (Still calling.) Sheriff, you go on out there and disarm Lee, and I promise that if a straw so much as moves, I'll blow the brains clean out of this here cohab brat.  
 SAMMY. Shoot, and be damned!  
 ALMA. (Coming from a back room, armed.) Don't you dare! Now drop your arms, both of you—and let him go. Quick!  
 (BECKER and STOKES do so.)  
 Now turn around.  
 (They face him.)  
 STOKES. Where'd you come from?  
 ALMA. You don't search real well, for professional lawmen.  
 BECKER. That ain't Lee, is it?  
 STOKES. Naw, it's his oldest son.  
 BECKER. An accomplice, eh? You know that holding us up like this makes you as much a criminal as your dad, don't you?  
 ALMA. Call it what you like. It's worth it if I can save an innocent man's neck.  
 JOHN D. (Appearing in the door, his gun down.) No it ain't, Alma.  
 (The others turn to face JOHN D.)  
 If there's one thing this family don't need—it's another one of us outside the law and eternally hunted down. Morning, William. Morning, Marshal. You really ought to look behind you more often. I've been following you ever since Washington.  
 BECKER. You what?  
 JOHN D. But before I tell Alma to put his piece away, I need to have your word on one thing—and you'd better keep it, hear?  
 STOKES. What's that, John D.?

JOHN D. If you promise to forget that my son here ever pulled a gun on you, and you agree not to hold it against him, I'll surrender here and now—  
 ALMA. Dad!  
 RACHEL. John D.!  
 SAMMY. No, Dad!  
 JOHN D. —and let you take me in. That's a pretty generous offer, don't you think—especially after the trouble you've been to all these years to sniff me out? Well, what do you say?  
 BECKER. That's fine with me, Lee. If you're really a man of your word.  
 JOHN D. Try me.  
 BECKER. All right. Then so am I.  
 JOHN D. Put your piece down, Alma.  
 (ALMA reluctantly does so. The others pick up their weapons. STOKES reaches for his handcuffs.)  
 BECKER. Don't bother, Sheriff. Mr. Lee means business. We can trust him.  
 JOHN D. Thank you, Marshal. It took a Gentile to say that, didn't it, William? You must both be hungry. You're taking me, I suppose, to the district prison.  
 BECKER. That's right, Mr. Lee. To Beaver.  
 JOHN D. Well then, there's time for a good breakfast before we leave. We can still make it before nightfall.  
 BECKER. That's right accommodating, Mr. Lee.  
 JOHN D. Think nothing of it. Please accept our hospitality.  
 RACHEL. (Collapsing in his arms.) Oh, John. Why, why?  
 JOHN D. Now buck up, Rachel. It's time some things got settled. We can't go on living like this forever, can we? A trial, if it's fair, will clear everything up.  
 RACHEL. But you—in prison, John D.!  
 JOHN D. The prison at Beaver has got to be a cut above Lonely Dell—where man never lived before and should not do so now. My only concern is leaving Emma all by herself. Maybe this way she won't have to stay there much longer. And it would be quite a thing if the Saints at Washington would stop rustling our cattle and their children wouldn't pretend the old mansion was some haunted house. They say our old fig tree was planted on the grave of a murdered child. And Polly's boys tried to peddle apples last summer. Couldn't even give them away. People thought they must be poisoned. They gossip that Brother Brigham has cursed me and my posterity to poverty and ignorance. No wonder folks at St. George won't let their sons court my daughters. Besides, I miss the Brethren. How I miss them and their fellowship. What they must think of me. A fair trial and an acquittal—that may help persuade them.

ALMA. Brother Brigham ought to know better already. Ain't he a prophet?

JOHN D. (*Fiercely.*) You hush, Alma! You hear me? I won't have you or any of mine speak like the Godbeites against Brother Brigham. Enough of that! Rachel, set two more places. And, Alma, you and Sam show the marshal and Brother Stokes to the pump, so they can wash up. They've soiled their hands some since they came here this morning.

STOKES. (*To BECKER.*) Think we should?

BECKER. What's the matter with you Mormons, Stokes? Don't you know a God-fearing man when you see one?

STOKES. But, if while we're gone and our backs are turned—

BECKER. You can trust your back to Mr. Lee, Sheriff. He is no common criminal. If you can't tell that, I can. And I pity those of you who, calling yourselves Saints, have so little charity.

STOKES. Well I'll be!

JOHN D. Thank you, Marshal. You give me some hope in earthly justice.

BECKER. We'll do our best not to disappoint you, Mr. Lee—at least at Beaver. But judging the climate of opinion in other places—well, if I were you, Mr. Lee, I wouldn't count on it . . . Where's that pump, boys? I'm getting hungry.

SAMMY. (*Sobbing.*) I'm sorry, Father. I didn't mean to give you away.

JOHN D. (*Pulling SAMMY to him.*) Don't fret, son. I know you meant well. Besides, it probably had to be. Now show the marshal how a Mormon takes adversity. Be courteous, and do his bidding.

SAMMY. This way, sir.

(ALMA and SAMMY lead MARSHAL BECKER and SHERIFF STOKES out the door. RACHEL goes to a back room.)

JOHN D. Well, well, Mary Ann. With all this fuss, I haven't even taken a look at my latest grandchild. Cute tyke. Takes after her grandma Aggatha. Just think of it.

MARY ANN. Of what, Father Lee?

JOHN D. Here she is—your seventh. You and Alma have been fruitful since I brought you two together. You and your family have made me very happy.

MARY ANN. And you gave me a whole new life, Father Lee, when you stepped aside for Alma. How can we ever thank you?

JOHN D. Don't thank me, dear. Thank the look on your faces.

MARY ANN. Faces?

JOHN D. I knew then that a boy not quite twenty and a girl seventeen-past, loving each other the way you did, could face anything together.

MARY ANN. Oh, Father Lee! (*Still holding the baby, MARY ANN embraces him.*)

RACHEL. (*Returning, whispering anxiously.*) John! It's clear now!

JOHN D. What's clear, my dear?

RACHEL. The back way. There's a horse there. Freshly saddled. You can just make it if you go now.

JOHN D. (*Sitting at the table.*) No, my dear, that's not the way.

RACHEL. (*Sitting across from him.*) You're giving up then?

JOHN D. Of course I'm not giving up.

RACHEL. You really don't expect justice, do you? That marshal—talking like such a big Christian but ready to blow Sammy's brains out just minutes before!

JOHN D. (*Reaching across the table for RACHEL's hand.*) True, there are others besides Indians—sweet talkers, well-mannered white men—who are ready to kill a child for the slightest reason. What if Alma hadn't come up behind them? Or I'd stayed in the straw? But they're respectable . . . just doing their duty, while I've been hunted down for nearly twenty years. Accused of what? Of simply doing the same thing.

RACHEL. Then how can you expect a fair trial?

JOHN D. There's always Brother Brigham. He'll use his influence, if he has to. If it's only at the very last minute. You wait and see.

RACHEL. Oh, John D. You ask for too much sometimes.

JOHN D. (*Patting her hand.*) Come on now. Smile at me. Please smile at me, won't you, Rachel?

(*She does so. The lights fade.*)

## ACT Two Scene Three

July 1875. A bench in front of the Fort Cameron guardhouse, Beaver, Utah. EMMA, well dressed, buggy whip in hand, sits alone and pensive. A GUARD approaches.

GUARD. He'll be here shortly . . . Nice, sunny day.

EMMA. Seems so.

GUARD. Staying here long?

EMMA. I'm only allowed a half hour.

GUARD. I mean—here in Beaver?

EMMA. Just overnight—to get a fresh start home in the morning.

GUARD. Whatcha doing? Tonight, I mean?

(EMMA stares at him, then looks away, refusing to answer.)

You needn't be so high and mighty. I was just trying to be nice . . . do you a favor. With your man in jail since last November an' you havin' to share him with so many others, thought you might jest be a little hungry.

EMMA. Hungry?

GUARD. More starved than some others for you-know-what, I mean.

(EMMA turns her back to him, barely suppressing rage.)

GUARD. (Smiling.) All right, lady. If that's how you want it. But it's your loss.

EMMA. Please bring my husband out now.

GUARD. Sure thing.

(The GUARD saunters off, then returns with JOHN D., who walks quickly to EMMA. She holds her husband at arm's distance until, cowed by their stares, the GUARD leaves. Then EMMA and JOHN D. passionately embrace.)

JOHN D. How was your trip?

EMMA. Not bad. Today at least. They lent me a buggy when I got to Cedar.

JOHN D. How are the children?

EMMA. Fine.

JOHN D. Lonely Dell?

EMMA. The same as ever. The Paint Brush is out again. Brighter than for some time. A deep dark stain here and there on the light sandstone.

JOHN D. You look lovely as ever.

EMMA. You were never more handsome.

JOHN D. Think that will persuade the jury?

EMMA. You have nothing to fear, John D. Eight of the jury are Latter-day Saints.

They'll acquit you.

JOHN D. How about the four nonmembers? They'll want my blood.

EMMA. Give them a chance.

JOHN D. And if it's a hung jury, it'll go to Salt Lake. It'll become a show trial. An embarrassment to the Church—more than ever. The Gentiles will force the Church's hand. Witnesses will be found to testify against me.

EMMA. This jury will come around. They'll be fair. Phil will persuade them.

JOHN D. Klingensmith? He's gone. Jack too. He's no longer a bishop.

EMMA. I know. But he's still your strongest witness. Miles spoke to him just last week. He'll testify the way he did four years ago in his affidavit.

JOHN D. You think he'll tell them I wasn't at the meeting of the council?

(She nods.)

That I tried to call off the massacre?

(She nods again.)

That I took my orders from Higbee, and he from Haight and Dame?

EMMA. He will.

JOHN D. If they'll only believe him.

EMMA. They're even more likely to now that he's left the Church.

JOHN D. Then maybe we've half a chance.

EMMA. We have, John. I'm sure we do! And, remember, you're not the only one on trial. They've indicted Dame and Haight, Higbee, and several others.

JOHN D. But they're all in hiding. I'm not. Well, enough of that. You reassure me some. How's Rachel? Did you visit her on the way up?

EMMA. I will going back. I'm afraid she's still jealous because I had you all to myself at Lonely Dell. She won't be too pleased I came to see you without her.

JOHN D. Maybe you'll become closer when I'm no longer there to fight over.

EMMA. Don't say that, John D. You may outlive us all yet.

(The GUARD reappears.)

GUARD. Another visitor, Mr. Lee.

JOHN D. Who is it?

GUARD. A Mr. Smith from Salt Lake City.

JOHN D. (Excitedly.) George Albert? Send him to us!

GUARD. You're allowed only one visitor at a time.

EMMA. (Quickly rising.) Then I'll go—and come back.

(As she approaches the GUARD, another appears by his side.)

2ND GUARD. (to the first) I'll relieve you now. Who's she?

1ST GUARD. Oh, just one of Mr. Lee's whores.

(EMMA, who has just passed them, turns and strikes the 1ST GUARD's face with her buggy whip, then swings again, but he manages to duck and run out. Regaining her composure, EMMA looks once more at JOHN D. The 2ND GUARD laughs good naturedly, JOHN D. and EMMA break into smiles, and EMMA leaves.)

JOHN D. I've got another visitor.

(GEORGE ALBERT SMITH appears.)

SMITH. Here I am now. (To the GUARD.) May I talk to him?

GUARD. Sure. Go ahead. (He leaves.)

SMITH. (Joining JOHN D. on the bench.) How are you, John?

JOHN D. Never thought I'd see you here.

SMITH. Was passing through. Had a spare hour. Knew exactly where to find you. So here I am.

JOHN D. Anyone send you?

SMITH. Just missed my old friend. Thought I'd try to cheer him a little.

JOHN D. You're a kind-hearted cuss, George Albert. As kind a man as ever lived.

I remember how you talked to your sick oxen, crossing the plains, offering them melted snow and feeding them handfuls of grain. Couldn't stand to kill one that was shot up by the Indians, or watch while we put it out of its

misery. Then you took those very Indians to your tent, saw how miserable they were, offered them bread, finally gave them your dead ox in exchange for their emaciated child, so you could clothe and feed him.

SMITH. You were always good to the Indians too, John.

JOHN D. Too good, it seems.

SMITH. I didn't mean that.

JOHN D. I know. But since those days, I have waded through trouble, George Albert—and passed through dark and trying hours. Not that you haven't, too. You lost George Albert, Jr.—how long ago now?

SMITH. Fifteen years exactly.

JOHN D. To other Indians.

SMITH. Yes. You comforted me then.

JOHN D. Forgive me, George Albert, but many who should have been my friends have put their feet upon my neck—not you and not Brother Brigham, God bless you. Way back in Winter Quarters, Brother Brigham said that no man in this Church had done as much for the soldiers' wives and the poor widows as Brother Lee. And Heber C. Kimball said, "In the name of Israel's God, this man Lee, who now is so much spoken evil of, will yet destroy and trample under his feet and walk over their graves, those that would destroy him"—and they haven't forgotten. They do remember me, don't they? Don't you, George Albert?

SMITH. Yes, we do.

JOHN D. Well, my trials have taught me at least one thing.

SMITH. What's that?

JOHN D. Patience. Earlier I had zeal but not according to knowledge. I wanted to do good but didn't know how to bear with folks. I gained their ill will by my folly. I figured others wouldn't resent me if I thought well of them. I never remember feeling malice toward another man, George Albert.

SMITH. I believe you, John.

JOHN D. I figured—for all my shrewdness in other ways—that others were that way too. I didn't know there were so many warm-water Saints.

SMITH. You still have friends.

JOHN D. I know.

SMITH. And like Isaac knew his father Abraham still loved him . . .

JOHN D. Yes?

SMITH. You know that Brother Brigham still loves you, don't you, John D.?

JOHN D. What do you mean?

SMITH. It's terribly important that, now you've been imprisoned and must stand trial, you win this one.

JOHN D. Yes. Of course. I hope I will. But either way he'll support me, won't he? Abraham didn't sacrifice Isaac after all, did he?

SMITH. Isaac wasn't sacrificed, true. But he was sanctified. And had it been necessary—

JOHN D. But he owes me that, doesn't he?

SMITH. Owes you? Owes you what, John D.? I understand how hard it must have been, dear friend, to face up to it all, but, you remember, when you first reported to us about the massacre?

JOHN D. Yes?

SMITH. How you perjured yourself before President Young?

JOHN D. Perjured?

SMITH. How you told him the Indians were entirely responsible? How you named no white men, not even those who came to bury the dead?

JOHN D. There may have been some things I didn't say then. I didn't try to make myself look any better—or any worse—than the rest.

SMITH. Still there was information you didn't give him.

JOHN D. Did he want it?

SMITH. Probably not. But if he'd had it, he might have known better, sooner, how to act.

JOHN D. But what of all your rabble-rousing speeches about Johnston's Army and Brigham's powwow with the chiefs? Don't you suppose that made some difference too?

SMITH. It's possible.

JOHN D. And that's all?

SMITH. John. It's you who are on trial. Not me. Not Brother Brigham.

JOHN D. Not any of the rest of you as long as I stay on trial, you mean. I and no one else. So long as they pinpoint the blame on some no-count Indian farmer. That way I still serve the cause, don't I? Is that why, after I was cut off, folks still occasionally spoke of my "mission"?

(SMITH does not reply.)

When did you first think I was . . . that I and the others were implicated?

SMITH. It's hard to say. We didn't like to talk—or think—about it. Dwelling on it, brooding wouldn't help the Saints to prosper or survive. John, remember Brother Brigham's advice that helped us get across the plains and withstand all the other crises thus far: "Keep your face to the setting sun."

JOHN D. "The night is short and will pass as a dream."

SMITH. John, everything you ever did, you did to build the kingdom, to aid the people in their troubles. We know that. You never turned a hungry person

from your door, did you?

(JOHN D. weeps, silently. After a long interval SMITH takes his hand, pats his shoulder, and stands. JOHN D., still weeping, does not respond.)

I must go, John.

(SMITH is nearly offstage when JOHN D. speaks.)

JOHN D. George Albert?

SMITH. Yes, John.

JOHN D. Say hello to Brother Brigham!

(The lights dim.)

## ACT TWO

### Scene Four

1875. Several months later. Lee's Ferry at Lonely Dell. EMMA rocks a cradle with one hand and with the other stirs food in a kettle which hangs over an open fire. Suddenly standing, she peers about her, as if hearing someone, then calls.

EMMA. Ann Eliza! Isaac! Is that you?

(Carrying pack and rifle, JACOB HAMBLIN appears, then walks toward her.)

Oh! It's you! How are you, Jacob?

JACOB. (Laying down his gear.) Tired. It's a long hike down here. Gets longer each time I come. How are your supplies?

EMMA. We're nearly out of flour.

JACOB. I had some forwarded to you. Three hundred pounds. It should get here in another week.

EMMA. Thank you.

JACOB. I don't know how you stand it, Emma.

EMMA. Stand what?

JACOB. This place—all by yourself. Cooking over an open fire.

EMMA. It's pleasant to be out like this. When the weather's bad I cook inside the shelter.

JACOB. With no good ventilation.

EMMA. This is hardly the place for a mansion.

JACOB. And your last one there. You had her all by yourself, I hear, in your husband's absence.

EMMA. I managed. The older children—they helped me.

JACOB. That was something to put them through, wasn't it? But you wouldn't have needed to if you'd avoided the man once he was cut off the Church.

EMMA. You think that was a sin—to remain his wife and bear his children?

JACOB. You said it, Emma. I didn't.

EMMA. Now you just listen here, sir . . . Wait! Wait right there!

(EMMA rushes to the nearby shelter and quickly returns with AGGATHA's journal and a bundle of letters.)

Here. Here are just three letters. And there are others. Read them—each in turn—and then tell me if my man is such a sinner!

JACOB. (Reading.) "Dear Brother Lee!"

EMMA. That one's from three years ago, two years after his excommunication!

JACOB. "If you continue faithful and true to your mission—"

EMMA. Mission! Did you catch that, Jacob?

JACOB. "—you shall never be captured by your enemies. Take no further trouble on that point. You shall have timely warning of the approach of danger and shall be remembered for your integrity and your interest in the welfare of this people and kingdom." But it isn't even signed. Just says "confidential." And his enemies did capture him, didn't they? So how faithful and true was he?

EMMA. That's because he traveled from here when he shouldn't have, that's all. Now go on. Read the next one, dated just two years ago. That one's signed all right—by A. F. MacDonald, Brother Brigham's private secretary. Then here's one from January of last year. And look at the signatures this time—two of them: "Yours respectfully," respectfully, Jacob, "Brigham Young, G. A. Smith." Besides, Jacob, what makes you think John D. ever did anything wrong—that he wasn't authorized to do what he had to at Mountain Meadows? There's that letter with the orders from Colonel Dame. I can remember the words, I've read it so often: "Compromise with Indians if possible . . . but on no condition . . . precipitate a war with them while there is an army marching against our people. Restrain them and save the company. If that is impossible, save the women and children."

JACOB. "If that is impossible"? You're sure that's what it says?

EMMA. I'm certain.

JACOB. Let me see it.

EMMA. I don't have it here.

JACOB. Where is it?

EMMA. It was pinned into this journal. But one day after they arrested him, men came here.

JACOB. What men?

EMMA. A sheriff. From Iron County. He showed me a warrant, then asked to see John D.'s papers. They looked through them, then returned them . . . (indicating the letters) . . . with these and the journal. The next time I looked for it, Dame's letter was missing. They must have taken it.



JACOB. Then don't mention it.  
 EMMA. Why not?  
 JACOB. Because it doesn't mean a thing.  
 EMMA. What doesn't?  
 JACOB. Your word. It's just hearsay.  
 EMMA. Don't you believe me, Jacob?  
 JACOB. Whether I do or not, no court will.  
 EMMA. I'm not talking to some court, Jacob. Or am I? I thought I was talking to my husband's partner and longtime friend, his brother in the gospel. You at least be fair, Jacob. At least admit that John D. is no more a villain . . . has no more earned all this persecution than any of the others.  
 JACOB. I can't, Emma.  
 EMMA. Can't? Why can't you?  
 JACOB. You really want to know?  
 EMMA. Yes, I'd like to know.  
 JACOB. You're sure?  
 EMMA. I'm not afraid of the truth, Jacob.  
 JACOB. All right then. Those Fanchers . . .  
 EMMA. Yes?  
 JACOB. He personally executed at least two of their women.  
 EMMA. How do you know? You weren't there.  
 JACOB. My Indian told me. He was there.  
 EMMA. Albert? But he was just a child then. He might have imagined it.  
 JACOB. Albert is very plain spoken—always was. He only tells about what he hears or sees.  
 EMMA. It's still just hearsay. His word—secondhand. Have you . . . have you ever told anyone about this?  
 JACOB. Just you.  
 EMMA. What are you going to do about it?  
 JACOB. That depends . . . Emma, wouldn't you rather face eternity with a man who held the priesthood?  
 EMMA. John D. will get his priesthood back—I don't know how, but he will.  
 JACOB. Meanwhile, hadn't you better settle for someone who's present and accountable—full flesh-and-blood, with his priesthood still intact?  
 EMMA. What are you suggesting, Jacob Hamblin?  
 (JACOB stares at her with a faint smile. She walks, as though drawn to him, then suddenly slaps his face.)  
 EMMA. Even if it weren't a question of mortal sin, Jacob Hamblin, I would

prefer to remain attached to John D. under the worst conditions than live without him under the most favorable—with you or with any other. Go mind your own wives, Jacob—and your Indians! (*The lights dim.*)

ACT Two  
 Scene Five

May 1876. Salt Lake City. A cell in the state penitentiary. JOHN D., dressed in a civilian suit, is packing a suitcase. MARSHAL BECKER joins him.

BECKER. Well, Mr. Lee. We'll have you out of here in another hour. Selfishly, I'm sorry to see you go. You've been such a help to the warden here.  
 JOHN D. The warden's been very kind to me, sir. But I'm even more grateful to this Mr. Hooper you say put up bail for me. Why he'd do so, I'll never understand. \$15,000—and a complete stranger!  
 BECKER. (*Handing him a letter.*) Here. This may explain it.  
 JOHN D. Who's it from?  
 BECKER. It doesn't say.  
 JOHN D. (*After reading the letter silently.*) They want me—whoever it is—to jump bail and flee the country: "Flee and save yourself," it says. "We will assist you into Mexico. Wait for further instructions."  
 BECKER. Well? What are you going to do?  
 JOHN D. I read it to you, didn't I, Marshal? I'd have kept it to myself if I'd thought to take them up on it.  
 BECKER. Yes. Well, there's another possibility.  
 JOHN D. What's that?  
 BECKER. It's been done before—notorious outlaws with colorful stories like your own take their bail, go back east with two or three responsible men and give public lectures—get their stories written up with a picture. It would sell for a dollar each to the audience. In no time you'd take in thousands. This being the Centennial year, you could draw a big crowd back in Philadelphia. You could relieve your financial straits, settle bills, help your family.  
 JOHN D. But I'd have to tell things if I did that, wouldn't I? Tell on others.  
 BECKER. You'd need to dress it up some.  
 JOHN D. And the retrial. That would still be three months away. Retrial, and maybe another hung jury.  
 BECKER. If by then you were famous and could afford a topnotch eastern lawyer—you'd probably have a better chance convincing them next time.  
 JOHN D. By sullyng others' reputations, you mean—including Brigham Young's.

No, Marshal. I can't do that.

BECKER. You know what I think, Mr. Lee?

JOHN D. What's that?

BECKER. I think you've run so afoul of him because you're just like him.

JOHN D. You think so?

BECKER. Both equally strong-willed.

JOHN D. That may be. But there's one important difference.

BECKER. What's that?

JOHN D. While *his* will is *my* pleasure—

BECKER. Your will is *his* annoyance. Irritation. Headache.

JOHN D. That is so. But what I had in mind was why that should be. You see, he's also been my closest friend, my champion, and I his adopted son.

BECKER. Why should it be then?

JOHN D. Because whenever he speaks, it is revelation, while whatever I do or say is never more than a groping approximation. Rash. Impulsive. My own opinion. Between us there is . . . there can be no real parity . . . no real friendship. I know that now. I should have known it earlier. I'd have been more cautious.

BECKER. When's the last time you heard from him—or any of your leaders? You've written them many an appeal since you came here.

JOHN D. I haven't heard directly from any of them since Apostle Smith visited me last year at Beaver—just before my first trial. But today a Mr. Hooper who I'd never heard of put up bond for me, and on the same day I receive word that someone will help me flee the country. Who does that sound like?

BECKER. But you refuse that help too.

JOHN D. Marshal. I've thought it over. If none of them will come forward to defend my good name, then I prefer to take up winter quarters here in Utah, where they must still try me—not run away, and certainly not dishonor myself by vilifying my own people. You know what folks back East would make of it.

BECKER. Then you'll meet up with Judge Boreman again at Beaver three months from now. You know he's opposed to you, don't you? You'll have no stronger case than before, and unlike the witnesses who refused to testify against you last year, some may be found, some induced to talk. The antipolygamists and the *Salt Lake Tribune* want to embarrass you Mormons over what happened at Mountain Meadows, Mr. Lee. And I tell you this, confidentially, as one who respects your character and your relative innocence—it's only a question of which Mormon or Mormons receive the blame. Naturally, as far as your church is concerned—the fewer the better.

JOHN D. Marshal. I know all that. If every man had been as decent to me as you . . . but they haven't. (*Bitterly.*) If it's my blood they thirst for, then let them have it. The Power that rules the destinies of men is more potent than vindictiveness or the puny arm of flesh. I take comfort that the apostles and prophets of old suffered like me.

BECKER. Then is that why you seek to destroy yourself, Mr. Lee?

JOHN D. Not destroy, Marshal. No. Not destroy.

BECKER. Then why, Mr. Lee? I can't figure you Mormons.

JOHN D. Not destroy myself. But save my soul!

(*The lights dim.*)

## ACT TWO

### Scene Six

*September 14, 1876. Courtroom at Beaver, Utah. The presiding magistrate, JUDGE BOREMAN, the PROSECUTOR, and, in the witness box, LABAN MORRILL. The defendant, JOHN D., sits apart from the others. Behind him stands an armed GUARD.*

PROSECUTOR. My colleague of the defense has asked you here, Mr. Morrill, because of your presence at the militia meeting in Cedar City on Sunday, September 6, in that fatal year, 1857. In your testimony, you have admitted that although on that occasion the officers met expressly to formulate a strategy that would contain the Indians, they also agreed to authorize the defendant to hold the Indians in check until the arrival of further instructions from Governor Young. Is that not so?

MORRILL. That is so. However, until I and some others protested, there were those who would have, as best I remember, been willing to dispatch the Missourians without bothering to first send a rider to Salt Lake.

PROSECUTOR. The prosecution requests that Mr. Morrill's last statement be stricken from the record as irrelevant. We are here to try but one party—the defendant Lee.

BOREMAN. Request granted.

PROSECUTOR. You may step down, Mr. Morrill.

(*MORRILL does so.*)

Although the defendant was not present when this assignment was conferred about, we have established that he did agree to fulfill it. This is why he traveled to the site of the massacre the very next day. But—as witnessed by many a horrified traveler in the months that followed—the scores of bloated, mangled corpses, torn from the shallow earth by marauding wolves and further exposed by alternating freeze, thaw, and flood, none of them

decently clothed—all this indelibly attests, gentlemen of the jury, to just how unfaithfully, how monstrously and perversely, the defendant actually fulfilled his duty.

VOICE OF THE COUNSELOR FOR THE DEFENSE. I object, your Honor. The prosecutor is pandering to the jury in an emotional and prejudiced fashion. The condition of the corpses—their inadequate burial—cannot be ascribed to the defendant.

PROSECUTOR. No. I suppose not. Just their untimely deaths. I withdraw my previous comment.

BOREMAN. In that case—objection sustained.

PROSECUTOR. And now, your Honor, I would like briefly to question each of four more witnesses. The first is Mr. Samuel Knight.

BOREMAN. You may proceed.

PROSECUTOR. Mr. Knight, please.

(SAMUEL KNIGHT appears and takes the witness stand.)

You've already been sworn in with the other witnesses, have you not?

KNIGHT. I have.

PROSECUTOR. Mr. Knight. You were ordered to drive the second wagon, were you not—containing the Fancher Company's weapons, gear, and wounded?

KNIGHT. Yes. I was ordered to do that.

PROSECUTOR. How many people occupied your wagon, Mr. Knight?

KNIGHT. Two men, one woman, and, I think, some children.

PROSECUTOR. They were all dispatched, were they not, when the Indians attacked?

KNIGHT. That is correct.

PROSECUTOR. Who killed the woman, Mr. Knight?

KNIGHT. (In a low voice.) Lee did.

(An audible gasp from the unseen spectators.)

PROSECUTOR. Would you repeat that name, Mr. Knight? Louder this time—and the full name, please? Who did you say killed that helpless, wounded woman who was lying at the time in your wagon?

KNIGHT. (Louder.) John D. Lee.

PROSECUTOR. How did he murder her, Mr. Knight?

KNIGHT. With an instrument.

PROSECUTOR. What kind of instrument?

KNIGHT. The butt end of a gun.

PROSECUTOR. He used it to bash her skull in, did he?

KNIGHT. Yes. I think so.

(Another audible gasp.)

PROSECUTOR. Thank you, Mr. Knight. Does the defense wish to question this witness?

COUNSELOR. (Coming forward.) I do, Mr. Knight. Are you sure the defendant employed the butt end of a gun and didn't just shoot her instead?

KNIGHT. That's as I remember it.

COUNSELOR. Did anyone else assist the defendant?

KNIGHT. I don't know if there was others or not. I tried hard not to see any of it.

COUNSELOR. Then why, if you tried not to see what was happening, can you be so sure, so long afterward, about how that woman died and at whose hand? Weren't there Indians all around you? Weren't they right there alongside Lee? Well?

KNIGHT. Sure, they was. There was far too many Indians. That was the trouble. How was we to contain them?

COUNSELOR. But just at that moment in the wagon, weren't Indians there too?

KNIGHT. Sure. They was jumpin' out of the brush. Comin' at us from every direction. I wasn't sure but what they'd tomahawk us all.

COUNSELOR. What were the Indians doing as they came toward you?

KNIGHT. They was killin' people. Killin' practically everyone in sight.

COUNSELOR. Then do you still maintain it was the defendant Lee who killed that woman? Or, after thinking it over, are you maybe a little unsure?

KNIGHT. It's still my impression that John D. Lee killed that one woman.

COUNSELOR. But do you know it?

KNIGHT. Yes, sir. Yes. I do.

COUNSELOR. How do you know it, Mr. Knight?

KNIGHT. I just do.

COUNSELOR. Thank you. That will be all.

(KNIGHT leaves.)

PROSECUTOR. I now call on Mr. Samuel McMurdy.

(MCMURDY appears and takes the witness stand.)

Mr. McMurdy, you were ordered to drive the first wagon, were you not—the one carrying children under the age of ten?

MCMURDY. I was.

PROSECUTOR. From where you sat, Mr. McMurdy, could you see into the wagon behind you?

MCMURDY. I could.

PROSECUTOR. Did you also see the defendant murder that poor woman?

MCMURDY. Yes. I did.

PROSECUTOR. Thank you. That will do.

COUNSELOR. One moment, Mr. McMurdy.

MCMURDY. Yes, sir.

COUNSELOR. Would you please describe for us how you recall the death of the woman we've been discussing?

MCMURDY. Well, I don't exactly recall that he—

COUNSELOR. Who is *he*, Mr. McMurdy?

MCMURDY. Lee. I don't exactly recall seeing him strike her with a club or another object, but I did see him draw a pistol and shoot, and then I saw the woman fall.

COUNSELOR. Then she was standing—not lying down, as Mr. Knight testified?

MCMURDY. Well . . . yes, that's as I recall it.

COUNSELOR. But in the wagon?

MCMURDY. Yes. In the wagon.

COUNSELOR. You're sure she wasn't standing outside the wagon?

MCMURDY. Well, maybe . . . but, no, I don't think so.

COUNSELOR. And it was a pistol this time, not a rifle?

MCMURDY. I believe it was . . . but I can't remember too well. It's been so long.

Besides, I was awful busy just then, holding down the horses.

COUNSELOR. I see. Did you notice, Mr. McMurdy, in which direction the defendant was aiming when he shot his weapon? Could he have aimed it, say, outside the wagon? And the woman been felled by an Indian?

MCMURDY. I suppose. But I doubt it.

COUNSELOR. You doubt it? Why do you doubt it might have happened that way instead of some other way—particularly if just then you were so busy with the horses?

MCMURDY. Because I do. That's why. That's how I recall it—he killed that woman.

COUNSELOR. Did you help kill anyone, Mr. McMurdy?

MCMURDY. I had nothing to do with that at all.

COUNSELOR. Then you didn't raise your own hand against anyone at that time, or do any of the killing?

MCMURDY. I believe I am not on trial, sir.

COUNSELOR. Do you refuse to answer my question?

(MCMURDY does not answer.)

Do you refuse, Mr. McMurdy, to say whether or not you yourself participated in the killing? And I remind you that you are under oath.

MCMURDY. I do not wish to answer.

COUNSELOR. Very well. I have no more questions. Please take your seat.

(MCMURDY leaves the witness chair.)

(To the PROSECUTOR.) Next?

PROSECUTOR. Mr. Nephi Johnson.

(JOHNSON appears and takes the witness stand.)

You were an Indian scout back then, were you not, Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON. That is so.

PROSECUTOR. And observed the entire action, from a safe distance—as a lookout for the militia?

JOHNSON. I did.

PROSECUTOR. Did you also observe how this woman died?

JOHNSON. I did.

PROSECUTOR. Tell us about it.

JOHNSON. I saw Lee fire off. Then I saw a woman in the lead wagon fall. Later I saw Lee and some Indians throwing the bodies out of the wagon.

PROSECUTOR. Is that all?

JOHNSON. Well, I couldn't swear to it, I was so far away, but I thought I saw Lee going through motions that would indicate he was cutting a man's throat.

PROSECUTOR. (To the COUNSELOR.) Your witness.

COUNSELOR. Mr. Johnson. You said you saw this woman fall in the lead wagon, did you not?

JOHNSON. Yes.

COUNSELOR. But the woman we've been discussing was in the second wagon, the one driven by Mr. Knight.

JOHNSON. Then maybe it was another woman.

COUNSELOR. There were no adults in the first wagon, Mr. Johnson. How high were you stationed, by the way, when you observed the action?

JOHNSON. I was up quite a ways—on a rise, I was too far away to take part myself—in the action.

COUNSELOR. I see. Were the wagons covered?

JOHNSON. They were.

COUNSELOR. And you were high above them?

JOHNSON. Yes. Quite high.

COUNSELOR. But not so high you couldn't see very well what went on inside them?

JOHNSON. Well, I don't know. I was still able to.

COUNSELOR. You also attended the meeting with the militia and Indian chiefs, didn't you—just before the party surrendered?

JOHNSON. Yes.

COUNSELOR. Who was in charge?

JOHNSON. Why, Lee was.

COUNSELOR. Why do you say that?

JOHNSON. He was a Major.

COUNSELOR. But so was Higbee.

JOHNSON. Lee did most of the talking. He acted like a man who had control.

COUNSELOR. But did he really have control—more than Higbee?

JOHNSON. I can't say.

COUNSELOR. Did you really believe that the defendant had absolute control of everything that went on there?

JOHNSON. He acted like it.

COUNSELOR. But what do you believe about it?

(JOHNSON does not answer.)

No more questions.

(He beckons JOHNSON to leave. JOHNSON does so.)

PROSECUTOR. My last witness is Mr. Jacob Hamblin.

(JACOB appears and takes the witness stand.)

Mr. Hamblin, you are well known to us all as a frontiersman and Indian scout with an impeccable reputation for honesty.

JACOB. (Breaking into a relaxed, confident smile.) Thank you.

PROSECUTOR. Mr. Hamblin, what more have you to tell us about the behavior of the fiend who is here on trial—and to whose ruthless murder of an innocent woman, another man's wife and the mother of who-knows-how-many children, at least three other witnesses have already testified?

JACOB. I don't rightly know about that cold-blooded deed.

PROSECUTOR. That's all right, Mr. Hamblin. We know you weren't there in person. But what more do you know about Mr. Lee's activity on that dreadful occasion?

JACOB. I know that two more women—young ladies—were brought out and hidden in the brush and escaped the first massacre.

PROSECUTOR. Hidden by whom, Mr. Hamblin?

JACOB. By an Indian chief from Cedar City.

PROSECUTOR. How, Mr. Hamblin, would you say this involves Mr. Lee?

JACOB. The chief asked Lee what he should do with them.

PROSECUTOR. And what did Lee tell the chief?

JACOB. That the chief should kill one, and he would kill the other.

PROSECUTOR. And who did you mean by "he," Mr. Hamblin?

JACOB. Lee.

PROSECUTOR. How did Mr. Lee kill her?

JACOB. He cut her throat.

(A horrified gasp and buzz from the spectators. JOHN D. noticeably blanches.)

BOREMAN. Silence! Silence!

PROSECUTOR. Thank you, Mr. Hamblin. Gentlemen of the jury. I think you can see the likelihood that the defendant murdered not just one but two or perhaps as many as four separate women. Far from discrediting the witnesses, that is the unavoidable conclusion to which their slightly varied testimony has all along been leading. Which also, gentlemen—and I say this most gravely—leads to the strong possibility that the other wounded were similarly dispatched by this nefarious Lee, since, as can best be reconstructed, each of them likewise ended up in the same way—with his throat cut. (Another murmur from the spectators.)

BOREMAN. Silence!

PROSECUTOR. I herewith submit that, contrary to his orders and in defiance of his superior officers, the defendant, John D. Lee, was, in point of fact, responsible for planning and executing the massacre of some 120 innocent American citizens—men, women, and children—and for which I demand the full punishment afforded, in fact required, by the law . . . Have you any questions for this witness?

COUNSELOR. Only one. Mr. Hamblin, you openly admit that you were not personally present during the massacre or anywhere near at hand.

JACOB. That is so.

COUNSELOR. Then, Mr. Hamblin, how can you be so sure of what you say? Your statement is pure hearsay, and you haven't even told us where it came from. In all fairness, Mr. Hamblin, I must ask who told you this horrifying tale. Who is your source, Mr. Hamblin? What are his credentials?

JACOB. The very best.

COUNSELOR. Who is he then?

JACOB. John D. Lee!

COUNSELOR. Himself?

JACOB. Himself!

(A general hubbub.)

BOREMAN. Silence! . . . Silence! . . . Silence! . . . In view of this last disclosure, the counselor for the defense may wish to consult with his client.

COUNSELOR. I do, your Honor.

BOREMAN. I declare a brief recess.

(He strikes his gavel. The lights dim everywhere but on JOHN D. LEE.)

JOHN D. (*His taped thoughts—heard over a loudspeaker.*) These were all once my friends. They all know better, Jacob, too. Is it because we want so to be right, right at any cost—so that we don't know how to handle what is circumstantial or contradictory, especially in ourselves?

COUNSELOR. (*Rushing to him.*) Mr. Lee! Mr. Lee! You must defend yourself—if not for your own sake, then for your wives and children.

JOHN D. My wives? My children? That, my good man, is exactly why I cannot compromise. Their eternal welfare means that much to me.

COUNSELOR. Their what?

JOHN D. Some may not believe in eternity enough for that to make any difference, but I do. That's why I will face the punishment they insist on meting out to me—so my family can still revere my good name, even if no one else ever does. That will be their blessing, and they will understand. And maybe I'll be blessed too—because others forced me to take on the entire responsibility, I will leave this life seeing far more clearly than most of them ever will. Zealous? Yes, I was zealous. And for that I have incurred their wrath and envy. But it also helped me to serve the cause, to magnify my calling. I did that too, didn't I?

COUNSELOR. (*Crestfallen.*) I'm sure you did, Mr. Lee. I'm sure you did.

(JOHN D. looks away.)

Mr. Lee . . . in view of this last testimony . . . if I'm to do my job—the way I still mean to—I must know . . . in strictest confidence, of course . . . if you really did tell Mr. Hamblin what he testified to . . .

JOHN D. (*Only now turning to look at the COUNSELOR.*) You, too?

## ACT Two Scene Seven

March 23, 1877. Mountain Meadows, Utah. Early morning, as in the PROLOGUE. The sun has not yet risen. RACHEL, EMMA, ALMA, and MILES stand downstage, as before. This time, however, JOHN D. is with them. He wears a hat, overcoat, and muffler. Behind him lies an open rough wood coffin.

JOHN D. It was good of you to come, Miles. You've been a true friend.

MILES. Thank you, John D. But if you mean that—then listen to me now. The federal authorities will commute your sentence and spare your life if . . .

(JOHN D. vigorously shakes his head.)

RACHEL. Miles!

MILES. There's still time to make a public confession. But after the sun is up it will all be over—another "Mountain Meadows Massacre"!

EMMA. Miles! Why do you tempt him?

MILES. Because . . . because I love him. Why don't the rest of you? Alma?

ALMA. Because we love him even more.

MILES. I . . . see. Well, then . . . Oh, John D. If I could only change all this somehow, or take your place, I would. You know that, don't you?

JOHN D. I know. But this is not a time for many words, Miles. Words are not very important. Come. Embrace me. Then I'll say farewell to the others.

(MILES embraces JOHN D.)

My one faithful adopted son. I'm glad for your sake that you didn't come with me—that you were ill then.

MILES. (*Weeping.*) I'm not.

JOHN D. You still haven't learned what it costs to be a zealot. Good-bye, Miles.

MILES. (*Still weeping.*) Good-bye, John D.

JOHN D. (*Turning to RACHEL and EMMA.*) Well, my dears. Have you finally made your peace, too . . . with one another?

RACHEL. We have, John. For your sake.

JOHN D. Then let your love for me bind you together and not tear you apart. I shall hope to meet you in a better place, where I am free from pain. Rachel.

(*They embrace, kiss, then separate.*)

Emma?

EMMA. Yes, John D.?

JOHN D. What's the Paint Brush like this year in Lonely Dell?

EMMA. It's coming out already, John D. Like here. It should bloom well.

JOHN D. Like a fire?

EMMA. Like a fire in the bones. I used to be so fond of it—the Paint Brush. I'd worry some years when I thought it might be dying out, fading away. But it always renews itself. It always comes back—to remind us.

(*They kiss, then separate.*)

JOHN D. Alma?

ALMA. Father?

JOHN D. My eldest.

(ALMA impetuously embraces JOHN D.)

I love you so, my son.

ALMA. I love you, Father. And thank you for all I have—especially Mary Ann.

JOHN D. (*Holding ALMA apart.*) Be good to her, Alma. Look after all our family.

ALMA. I will.

(*Appearing from the opposite wing, upstage, the LIEUTENANT approaches.*)



LIEUTENANT. It is time, Mr. Lee.

JOHN D. (*To the others.*) Go, then.

(*The others exit upstage into the opposite wing.*)

LIEUTENANT. Have you any final words?

JOHN D. I have.

LIEUTENANT. Very well. You may address those present.

(*The LIBUTENANT moves apart. JOHN D. faces the direction in which the others have exited.*)

JOHN D. I have little to say this morning. I am on the brink of eternity, and its solemnities rest upon my mind. I am resigned to my fate. I have done nothing intentionally wrong. I did all I could to save those people. I would have given worlds if I could have prevented that calamity, but I could not do it. It seems a victim must be had, and I am the victim. I am being sacrificed to satisfy vindictive feelings, to gratify parties. I am ready to die. I trust in God. I do not fear death. I shall never go to a worse place than where I am now. My conscience is clear before God and man. I am ready to meet my Redeemer and those that have gone before me, beyond the veil. (*Emotionally.*) I most regret parting with my family. Many are unprotected and will be left fatherless. That touches a tender chord. I studied to make one man's will my pleasure for thirty years. See, now, what I have come to this day! . . . Again I regret leaving my dear family. Again I declare I did nothing designedly wrong in this unfortunate affair. I did everything in my power to save that people, but I am the one who must suffer. Having said this, I feel resigned. I ask the Lord, my God, if my labors are done, to receive my spirit . . .

LIEUTENANT. (*Moving to JOHN D.*) Have you finished?

JOHN D. Yes.

LIEUTENANT. Have you any requests?

JOHN D. Only shoot through my heart and spare my limbs.

LIEUTENANT. (*Nodding.*) Please be seated.

(*JOHN D. seats himself on the foot of the coffin but quickly stands again.*)

JOHN D. Here.

(*JOHN D. hands the LIBUTENANT his hat, overcoat, and muffler, then reseats himself. His posture is calm and dignified, as though he were presiding. The LIBUTENANT binds his eyes, then moves to upstage center. The sun is just beginning to rise. The sky is now blood red.*)

LIEUTENANT. (*Calling.*) Detachment! Forward march! Halt!

(*The five SOLDIERS, seen in ACT ONE, Scene One, have appeared and marched to upstage center, assuming their prior formation, except that they now face JOHN*

D., downstage. The tableau is the same as in the PROLOGUE, but the directions are now reversed, with JOHN D. onstage and the survivors off.)

LIEUTENANT. Man your arms! Ready! Aim!

JOHN D. Aim for my heart, boys!

(*The lights dim.*)

LIEUTENANT. Fire!

CURTAIN

# Matters of the Heart

THOM DUNCAN

## CHARACTERS

ROBERT BAINES, a stake president—late fifties

ALICE BAINES, Robert's wife—also late fifties

PAUL BAINES, their son—twenty

## SCENE

Part of the back yard and home of Robert and Alice Baines. Downstage left, at the edge of the neatly manicured lawn and bordering the downstage base of the house are various shrubs and flowers. Nearest the front steps, at stage right, and occupying a prominent spot in the row is an azalea bush just starting to bloom. A walkway immediately in front of this flower garden begins at the back steps and curves around the edge of the house through a gate toward the front of the house and stage right.

The interior of the house: a living room and dining room, kitchen offstage, and hallway leading to offstage bedrooms. The house is furnished in bland, inoffensive contemporary furnishings, the kind that at first set one at ease but very suddenly become boring because of their predictability. All the trappings expected in the home of a stake president are there: a floor-to-ceiling bookcase filled with Church books and classic literature, pictures of prophets and temples on the walls. On a small three-legged table in the upstage entryway is a set of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young bookends with leather-bound copies of the standard works stiffly upright between them; on the low mahogany coffee table, several issues of the *Ensign* are displayed.

(Classical music fills the darkness.)

(Lights up)

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(Music continues under scene, emanating from the stereo in the living room. ROBERT BAINES hacks away at an azalea bush and surrounding plants. His thinning hair hangs in sweat-soaked strands across his forehead. He wears overalls, gardening gloves, beat-up shoes. He works feverishly, his face is a mask of grim determination that borders on obsession. ALICE BAINES stands at the counter in the kitchen—two glasses and a pitcher of punch on a tray before her—reading a letter. Her hair is neatly coiffed and she wears a conservative housedress. On a silver chain around her neck hang a pair of glasses. After a few seconds, she puts down the letter, lets her glasses hang free, and picks up the tray. ALICE exits the kitchen and comes out to where ROBERT is gardening. She sets the tray down on the nearby patio table, pours the drink, and holds out one of the glasses to ROBERT.)

ALICE. Strychnine. Sugarless.

(ROBERT absentmindedly takes the glass, raises it to his lips, but stops short of taking a sip.)

ROBERT. What did you say? (Pause. ALICE laughs, joined by ROBERT. ALICE pours herself a glass.) Was I doing it again?

ALICE. Totally oblivious.

ROBERT. (Sips.) Sorry.

ALICE. You know, if I ever wanted to do away with you, I'd do it while you were working on the garden.

ROBERT. What did you say? Strychnine?

ALICE. Sugarless.

ROBERT. The best kind. Artificially sweetened strychnine has been proven harmful to your health. Causes cancer.

ALICE. I thought you might like a little something to drink. You've been out here all morning.

ROBERT. I appreciate that.

ALICE. (Referring to the azalea bush.) How's it going?

ROBERT. I put a call in to the guy at Three Pines Nursery. If he can't tell me what's wrong...

ALICE. You're out here every day, pruning it, watering it, digging the soil around it. If the other plants had feelings, they'd probably feel neglected.

ROBERT. A lot has to do with the time of year you plant, the amount of water. I may be giving it too much. I don't know. Could be a lot of things.

ALICE. Maybe you should have called the nursery earlier.

ROBERT. I planted every one of these shrubs and flowers. This is the first one to give me any trouble.

ALICE. I'm sure you know best.

ROBERT. I put this in the ground a year ago. It should be covered with flowers by now and be about three feet high. *(Points.)* Nothing. *(ROBERT hacks away at another branch, adds it to the pile. ALICE reaches for it.)* No, I'll take care of them. *(Holds out glass.)* But I could use some more strychnine.

*(ALICE pours him some punch as he places the branches into a nearby plastic bag.)*

ALICE. I've got his room ready. *(ROBERT stops with a handful of leaves, but only for a split second; now, as he continues to fill the bag, his movements are more direct, more forceful.)* Just the way he left it. A little more orderly, mind you ... but everything's there: the posters, the stereo ...

*(ROBERT finishes tying the bag of leaves, his voice straining with exertion.)*

ROBERT. Did you find that one album ... his favorite?

ALICE. Prominently displayed on top of the tape deck.

ROBERT. *(Stands with some effort.)* How did you manage to get rid of all my things?

ALICE. Just don't open the hall closet without a hard hat.

ROBERT. Good. Everything needs to be exactly as he left it. It mustn't look like we wanted him to go so we could have his room for my den.

ALICE. I don't think he would ...

ROBERT. Alice, he'll be going through a period of adjustment. Coming home early from a mission is traumatic enough. Everything needs to be as normal as possible. *(ROBERT crosses to the wall clock, compares it with his watch. He speaks over his shoulder to ALICE.)* When did he say ...

ALICE. I called the airport. His plane arrived on time.

ROBERT. He's taking a taxi, wasn't that ...

ALICE. He seemed pretty rushed.

*(ROBERT crosses into the parlor. He stands in front of the curtains, pushes them aside, looks out into the street.)*

ROBERT. He hasn't talked to us in a year, and when he calls from the airport, that's all he says: "Don't pick me up. I'll get a cab."

*(ALICE adjusts some flowers in a low vase in the center of the table.)*

ALICE. It was long distance. He wanted to save us money.

ROBERT. We could have afforded to talk to him for days—

ALICE. Well, maybe he had to make a fast connection.

ROBERT. Still, he could have said more than, "I'll get a cab." *(He looks at the clock again, then goes to window, looks out.)* What's it take, forty minutes from the airport?

ALICE. I'm sure he'll be here any minute now.

*(ROBERT sits in a chair, starts rummaging through a stack of papers and magazines on the coffee table.)*

ROBERT. *(To himself.)* I still don't understand why he didn't want us to meet him. Alice, have you seen that letter—? *(ALICE thrusts the letter into his face, which she was reading earlier. ROBERT takes it while fumbling his glasses on.)* President Andrews doesn't give us a clue why he's sending Paul home early ... *(reads)* "... for reasons that Elder Baines would like to discuss with you himself." *(Pause.)* Thank heavens he's still "Elder" Baines—

ALICE. Bob!

ROBERT. Sorry—

ALICE. You don't think for one minute that Paul would—?

ROBERT. *(Putting the letter in his breast pocket.)* No, of course not—

ALICE. Whatever his problem is, it's nothing that would endanger his membership in the Church, I know that.

ROBERT. Yes. Yes.

ALICE. Then ... why ... ?

ROBERT. I don't know. I'm just trying to figure it out, that's all.

ALICE. Paul would never do anything like that.

ROBERT. *(Looking at his watch again.)* Probably stuck in traffic. I heard on the news that there was an accident on the 21st South off-ramp.

*(ROBERT sits on the couch, opens the morning paper, scans the headlines.)*

ALICE. Would it make a difference? *(ROBERT looks up at her.)* Would you love him just the same—if he came home excom ...

*(She can't finish the word. ROBERT turns the paper to editorial section, straightens it out.)*

ROBERT. Of course I would.

ALICE. Because what he needs now, more than anything, is our understanding, our support ... not our condemnation.

ROBERT. I know.

ALICE. Does he know that? That you would love him regardless of what he does?

*(ROBERT doesn't answer. She pulls the paper down from his face.)*

ROBERT. You mean, did I tell him? Not in so many words. You don't sit your son down when he gets his call and say, "Paul, I'll love you even if you're the worst missionary in France." The father-son discussion prior to a son's mission is a time of encouragement.

ALICE. But he's not the worst missionary in France.

*(ROBERT drops the paper to his lap, takes the letter from his breast pocket.)*

ROBERT. His mission president says, *(scans the letter)* "... one of the most effective missionaries in the field." He's not been excommunicated, and he's not sloughing on the job ...

ALICE. Wait till he gets here, let him tell us. What's more important is, how do we deal with it . . . how are you going to deal with it?

ROBERT. Me?

ALICE. Yes, you.

ROBERT. It's not bothering you?

ALICE. Yes, of course it is. I've seen the sidelong glances from the other women in Relief Society; I can almost hear their thoughts: "What did her son do that he's being sent home early? What did she do wrong? If she, the wife of a stake president, can't do everything right, how can I ever hope to?"  
(ALICE, who had been in perfect control up to this point, suddenly turns away, reaching for a hanky. ROBERT is instantly on his feet, taking her by the shoulders.)

ROBERT. It's been rough for you, hasn't it?

ALICE. No, no at—

ROBERT. I don't mean just about Paul. I mean about everything. About being my wife—the notoriety . . .

ALICE. Bob, I'm sor—

ROBERT. Come on, now. Admit it. It's been rough, hasn't it? (Pause. ALICE nods. He takes her face in his hands.) Why haven't you told me before? Because you wanted to be strong, didn't you? You thought showing your true feelings would be a sign of weakness, didn't you? (Pause.) Believe me, I know the feeling. (He brings her with him, takes her into his arms.) I think you were right. What are we going to do about our son coming home early from his mission? (He kisses her. Pulling away, he looks at the dining room table.) And those flowers look great right where they are.

ALICE. Then I'll move them, because you have terrible taste. (She takes the flowers from the dining room table, goes into the parlor where she puts the flowers on the mantel piece. ROBERT follows her, stands looking at her work.) Did they mind terribly that you're taking the rest of the day off?

ROBERT. No, they understand a father's anticipation about seeing his son come home.

(Making a weak joke as he moves toward the front window.) Maybe not my particular anticipation . . .

(ALICE has had to move some pictures of her other sons and their families from the mantel piece to make room for the flowers. Now she picks up one, a photo of all five of her sons. She caresses the picture.)

ALICE. Robert?

ROBERT. Hmm?

ALICE. Are you going to let Paul give a homecoming talk? (ROBERT seems hesitant. ALICE becomes more enthusiastic.) It would be a wonderful experience for him!

ROBERT. Well . . . I . . . don't . . .

ALICE. Returned missionaries speak in church all the time.

ROBERT. True, but . . .

ALICE. But not missionaries who come home early?

ROBERT. No. And it's not because they're second-class citizens or anything. The youth need to view the mission experience in a positive light. Granted, there are . . . some difficult aspects to missionary life, but they find that out soon enough.

ALICE. (Firm.) Are you sure it's not because you . . . don't want people to know he's come home?

ROBERT. (Pause.) Is that it, Mother? Am I ashamed of my own son? (ROBERT sees her still holding the photo. He takes it from her, looks at it. Smiles.) Do you remember the day we brought him home? You had him in the bassinet, and he rolled over onto his stomach, lifted his head, and looked around through those squinty eyes?

(ALICE laughs as ROBERT squints, moves his head like one of those plastic dogs in the back of some people's cars.) It was in that split second, that frozen moment of time, that I saw the entire course of Paul's life stretching out before him. I knew then that, in the face of the unknown, Paul wouldn't shrink but would lift up his head and face life straight on—eyes squinty, maybe, but he would face it. And he was always like that—all through school. If a problem seemed too tough, he would bite his lip until he mastered it . . . Do you remember how he spent days patiently trying to tie his shoe? Never getting frustrated or discouraged. None of the other boys was like that. That's what makes it so difficult to accept—this thing about Paul coming home early from his mission. I get the feeling he's . . . running away from something. And I can't understand that.

(A knock on the door. ALICE rushes to the door, opens it. PAUL stands there, wearing his suit, but without the missionary badge.)

ALICE. Paul! You're home. (She launches herself toward PAUL, who just drops his luggage to take her in his arms and swing her around. When she finally comes to a stop, she speaks) Oh, Paul, I'm so glad you're back.

PAUL. Nobody can keep me away from your home cooking.

(ALICE steps back, scrutinizes PAUL.)

ALICE. You've gained weight . . . you've lost a little hair . . .

PAUL. Mom, I've only been gone a year.

ROBERT. (*Awkward.*) Welcome home, son.

(*There is an electric moment between the two men. ALICE senses this, steps back to silently urge them on.*)

PAUL. Thanks, Dad.

(*ROBERT makes the first move: puts out his hand, which PAUL takes.*)

ROBERT. (*Feigns a wince.*) I see you've learned this missionary handshake well.

(*Sincere.*) Congratulations.

PAUL. For what?

ROBERT. Your last baptism. President Andrews told me in his letter that your convert is now branch president.

PAUL. Frère DuChamp was a wonderful man. I was very lucky.

ROBERT. Blessed.

PAUL. (*Pause.*) Whatever.

(*ALICE sees the tension between the two men, tries to change the subject.*)

ALICE. (*Taking PAUL by the arm, moving him into the parlor.*) What's his first name? Friar?

PAUL. The word's "frère." French for "brother."

ALICE. Well, Paul. Don't be so formal. Sit down. This is your house, too.

(*She leads him to one end of the couch.*)

PAUL. (*Indicates the luggage.*) But what about—?

ALICE. We'll take care of that, later. You just sit down. (*ROBERT starts to sit in the chair, but ALICE gets there first, forcing ROBERT to sit at the other end of the couch, closer to PAUL. Once ROBERT sits, ALICE immediately stands up.*) Oh, I'm so flustered, I forgot! I have some punch for us. Father, you keep our son occupied till I get back.

(*Exiting, she gives ROBERT a look that says, "Don't you sit in that chair!" After a slight pause:*)

PAUL. Uh . . . how's the flower garden coming along?

ROBERT. Funny you should ask. I was working on it just before you—but you probably knew that already. (*ROBERT stands, moves toward the dining room, where the sliding glass door will take them outside. PAUL follows. ALICE mixes more drinks, setting out some brownies on a tray. ROBERT and PAUL pass by, on their way to the garden.*) I'm showing Paul the garden.

ALICE. Fine, dear.

(*ROBERT and PAUL go out the sliding glass door. A faint smile passes across ALICE's lips. ROBERT and PAUL stop before the brave azalea.*)

PAUL. That's new, isn't it?

ROBERT. Azalea. I planted it the day you entered the MTC. I work on it nearly

every day. It was my way of reminding myself that, as it grew, you'd be growing in another kind of field.

PAUL. It seems pretty mature now.

(*ROBERT notices that some stray branches still remain. He kneels to pick them up.*)

ROBERT. Your brothers will be here around five-thirty.

(*PAUL is suddenly animated.*)

PAUL. Rich, too?

ROBERT. He's taking the afternoon off and flying up. He probably won't be bringing Ruth.

PAUL. I wouldn't think so. Four kids—

ROBERT. Five, soon.

PAUL. She's pregnant again?

ROBERT. They called last night.

PAUL. Are they hoping for a girl this time?

ROBERT. Well, Ruth's practically given up hope after four boys. Of course, Richard wants five sons.

PAUL. (*Pause.*) Just like you.

ROBERT. Did we tell you he's been made a bishop?

PAUL. (*Quick.*) In a letter.

ROBERT. Yes, I suppose I did.

ALICE. (*Entering with punch and cookies.*) Here it is! Real Hawaiian Punch. (*Neither of the men move.*) Well, get over here, you two.

(*They join her at the table.*)

PAUL. Hawaiian Punch? The real thing?

ALICE. You're going to tell me they don't have this in France?

PAUL. No, I'm not. Because you already said it. But they also don't have Jell-O, decent ice cream, or white bread. There's a McDonald's on the Champs Élysées, but in name only. Secret Sauce or no, those Frogs can't make a decent hamburger.

ALICE. Frogs?

PAUL. That's what we call the French people.

ROBERT. You call them frogs?

PAUL. Only among ourselves.

ROBERT. Do you call the Germans krauts?

PAUL. (*Indignant.*) No.

ROBERT. Do you call the Jews Hebes?

PAUL. Of cour—

ROBERT. Do you call black people n—?

PAUL. I get it, Dad. *(Pause. Somewhat abashed)* I get it. *(ALICE and ROBERT share a look as PAUL takes a drink.)* Mom, this is great stuff.

ROBERT. Yes. Thank you, Mother. It's very delicious.

ALICE. So what are the fr—uh . . . the French people like?

PAUL. Just like you and me. Except they speak a different language.

ALICE. No, what I meant was: how do they react to the Church?

PAUL. France is a Catholic country. The most frequent response I ever heard at the door was "Je suis catholique et je reste catholique." "I'm a Catholic and I'll stay a Catholic."

ROBERT. Pretty rough, was it?

*(PAUL looks at his father.)*

PAUL. What do you mean, "rough"?

ROBERT. *(Fishing.)* It must have been discouraging. That's all I meant.

PAUL. *(Shrugs.)* Maybe a little.

ALICE. Did your father tell you about Ruth?

PAUL. Yeah. Can you believe it? Another kid?

ALICE. I'll tell you, she's absolutely amazing. Still looks like she's nineteen.

ROBERT. I wouldn't say that.

ALICE. All right. Twenty-one, then.

PAUL. Well, what about you? You had five kids. Look at you.

ALICE. Me? I'm a mess.

PAUL. Dad, is she fishing for a compliment?

ROBERT. More like trolling, if you ask me.

PAUL. Mom, you're not a mess. You're the best-looking mother I've ever had.

*(All laugh politely.)*

ALICE. Go on, you two. You know what I mean. Ruth jogs every morning.

PAUL. So you do canning every morning.

ALICE. She does that, too! *(Again, laughter.)* Want some more punch?

*(PAUL holds up his glass. ROBERT shakes his head.)*

PAUL. Speaking of good-looking twenty-one-years-olds, how's Lisa?

ALICE. The reception was absolutely beautiful. And her husband is nice, too. You knew him, didn't you, Paul?

PAUL. I still can't believe he would do that to me—come off his mission and steal my girl. *(Smiles wryly, simultaneous with a slight laugh.)* Some guys have no class.

ROBERT. It's nothing. You'll get over it.

PAUL. I am over it.

ROBERT. Good. She's not worth worrying about. You're a returned missionary.

An RM at BYU has nothing to worry about as far as girls are concerned.

*(PAUL seems very uneasy at this.)*

PAUL. Yeah, I know. It's all image.

ROBERT. What is?

PAUL. It's all image. Going to BYU would be just like the mission field. White shirts, short hair. It sends out a message to people: clean and wholesome. If you're an RM, you grow a mustache. That sends out a message to the girls. Clean, wholesome, spiritual. And ready.

*(There is no bitterness in this statement but ROBERT doesn't know how to take it.)*

ROBERT. Yes . . . well . . . unfortunately, appearances are everything in this telestial world we live in. In the afterlife . . .

PAUL. But why do we have to play the game? If we're trying to live a celestial law, why should we care about what the telestial world thinks?

ROBERT. You're right. Our sights should be set higher.

PAUL. So when are you going to start wearing colored shirts to church?

*(Pause. PAUL laughs, breaking the tension. ROBERT and ALICE join, relieved that it was all a joke. Or was it? ALICE stands, moves toward the house.)*

ALICE. Well, I'm going to make your favorite lunch, Paul.

PAUL. American food! I can't believe it. *(PAUL follows his mom. ALICE moves to the refrigerator, opens the door as PAUL moves by her.)* Oh, that reminds me, I've got something for you guys. *(PAUL rummages through one of his suitcases. ROBERT enters. His and ALICE's eyes lock. Pause.)* These are for you guys. *(PAUL comes back into the kitchen, holding two wrapped gifts, just as ALICE pulls out a tray of luncheon meat and bread from the refrigerator. PAUL, with a little protest from ALICE, takes the lunch tray to the counter, and gives the presents to his parents.)* This isn't honest-to-gosh baloney, is it?

ALICE. It certainly is. *(Indicates gift.)* What did you go and do this for?

*(They are all now at the counter, standing, or sitting on the stools.)*

PAUL. Just open them while I make a sandwich.

ROBERT. Thank you, son!

*(PAUL dives into the fixings as his parents begin to unwrap the presents.)*

PAUL. You know, the French don't even know what baloney is. I had to go to the American store in Paris whenever I was there to get this.

*(ALICE has opened her present by now: A glass figurine of one of the Relief Society monuments. ALICE's eyes well up in tears.)*

ALICE. Oh, Paul, this is so lovely!

PAUL. One of the men in my last branch was a glassblower by trade. I showed him a picture of the Relief Society's monument to women and he copied it. *(ROBERT has unwrapped a bound book, reads the title.)*



ROBERT. "The Missionary Journal of Paul W. Baines." (*Thumbs through it.*) It's all typed and bound.

PAUL. The glassblower's wife was a secretary who knew English. I had her type it for me.

ROBERT. (*Genuinely moved.*) Paul, this is wonderful! I'll treasure this always.

PAUL. You know, Mom, snails are good but they're nothing compared to a good old-fashioned baloney sandwich. (*Pause.*) So fill me in on the local scene. What's happened since I left?

ALICE. Let's see . . . Oh, Karl Thorne got his mission call to Japan.

PAUL. He finally straightened up enough to go, huh?

ROBERT. He said you inspired him to go.

PAUL. Me? Inspiring?

ROBERT. You were to Brother DuChamp.

ALICE. Have some milk.

ROBERT. Tell us about Brother DuChamp.

PAUL. What's there to tell?

ROBERT. Why didn't you write to us about him? He was baptized . . .

PAUL. A couple of months ago.

ROBERT. It was more than that.

PAUL. Guess I never got around to it. Anyway, it's all in the journal.

ALICE. Would you like another sandwich?

PAUL. No, thanks.

ALICE. Oh, that reminds me. Your trunk came last week.

(ROBERT goes to the guest closet, pulls out PAUL's trunk. It is heavy. PAUL eagerly starts unlatching it.)

PAUL. I've got some other things in here. They were too heavy to bring on the plane.

ROBERT. Your mother had the delivery man put it in here.

(PAUL opens the trunk, then sits on the couch and rummages around inside.)

ALICE. Your room is just like you left it.

PAUL. Same sheets and everything?

(ALICE smiles. Finally, PAUL finds what he was looking for: A square red rock, which he hefts, showing it is heavy.)

ALICE. What's that?

PAUL. It's called a *pavé*. The French use it pave their streets. Makes skateboarding real difficult. Maybe I'll use it as a paperweight. (*He pulls out some books.*) My French dictionary . . . and this book was given to me by one of the most beautiful French women I've ever met. (*This piques the interest of ROBERT*

and ALICE.) She was only seventeen. But she had the longest honey-blond hair that hung straight down her back. Incredibly mature for her age. And very spiritual. Not the weepy-eyed kind of spirituality a lot of girls have at her age—hers was real. The first time I met her was my very first day in the city. Le Havre. "The Harbor." On the northern coast of France, just across the English Channel from England. My companion picked me up at the train station and as we walked in the *salle*—sorry—as we walked into the meeting room, a bunch of members were there, polishing the floor. I was introduced around and Dominique—that was her name—said, "Come on, Elder Baines. Why don't you help?" She threw me a cloth and I did what everybody else was doing: threw the rag on the wooden floor and kind of moved it with my feet, like this. The thought went through my head: "Am I dancing with a girl? Isn't this against mission rules?" Anyway, when I left that town three months later, she was there at the train station. That's when she gave me this book on French grammar. As the train pulled away, I looked out the window . . . and she was waving at me. There were tears in her eyes. I told her in a letter that, if things didn't work out with Lisa and me, I would look her up. (*Back to reality.*) I guess I can do that now.

ALICE. She sounds like a lovely girl.

PAUL. She is. I have a picture of her here someplace.

ROBERT. You wrote to her?

PAUL. I know it was against mission rules. But I always got such an incredible spiritual uplift from that girl . . . I can't explain it.

ROBERT. I . . . see . . .

(*Reaching back into the trunk, PAUL pulls out a hunk of metal shaped like a grenade.*)

PAUL. Anybody know what this is?

ROBERT. Looks like a grenade.

(PAUL tosses it to his dad, who catches it handily.)

ALICE. Oh! No . . .

PAUL. It is. Don't worry, Mom. It's dead. I found this on the beach at Normandy.

I took it to an expert who told me it was used during World War II.

ROBERT. You'd think they'd have combed the beaches by now.

(PAUL pulls out a couple of books, hefts them.)

PAUL. Hey, is my bookcase empty?

ALICE. I gave all your old science fiction magazines to Ronnie. That is what you wanted me to do, isn't it?

(ROBERT looks at the books in PAUL's trunk.)

ROBERT. *The Journal of Discourses*. Where did you get those?

PAUL. There's a European distribution center in Liège. I ordered them.

ROBERT. When did you have time to read them?

PAUL. Haven't read them all yet.

ROBERT. Didn't you have a prescribed reading list as missionaries?

PAUL. I read all those, *The Book of Mormon* six times. These were in between.

You know me. Always the voracious reader.

ROBERT. You should have stayed with the scriptures. There's some questionable material—

PAUL. Questionable? Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt. How can anything they say be considered questionable?

ROBERT. I don't know. I've never read them—

PAUL. Never read them! Dad, this is history! This is the Church in its infancy.

ROBERT. I've never read them simply because there is so much that the modern Church leaders have written that just to keep track—

PAUL. There's some great stuff in here! You know, if you were to preach some of these things today, half the Church would get up and walk out.

ROBERT. Precisely why we shouldn't read them.

PAUL. They sell the *JDs* at Deseret Book.

ROBERT. At least missionaries shouldn't read them. There's deep doctrine in there. I've heard of some missionaries who've lost their testimonies from reading the *Discourses*.

PAUL. Did you know that there are over twenty different times, over as many years, that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God theory?

ROBERT. That's open to interpretation.

PAUL. There are accounts in journals relating to Orson Pratt, who didn't believe the doctrine, arguing with Brigham Young, who did.

ROBERT. Then if the books contain false doctrines, why did you read them?

PAUL. *(Shrugs.)* They were interesting.

ROBERT. I don't deny that there are many great truths in the *Journal of Discourses*. But the modern prophets have said that belief in Adam as our God is a false belief. Why Brigham Young taught it, or if he taught it as we understand the doctrine, I don't know. *(Pause.)* Anyway, this is not the time or place to get into this kind of discussion—if, indeed, there ever is a time or place. You're home safe and we're very glad. How was the flight over?

PAUL. Long. The food was good, but not as good as your home cooking. By the way, Mom, what's for dinner tonight?

ALICE. You haven't changed a bit, have you? Well, why don't you try and guess.

What kind of meal would I make on such a special day?

PAUL. Hmm—let's see. Fried chicken?

ALICE. That's right.

PAUL. And for dessert, German chocolate cake!

ALICE. You guessed it.

PAUL. Do we have to wait for everyone to get here? *(They all start to go to the kitchen, led by ALICE. PAUL remembers something. Starts rummaging through one of the suitcases.)* I almost forgot. There's something else I want to show you in my suitcase, and, Mom, you sidetracked me. *(He pulls out something wrapped in paper, holds it out before him as he now leads his mother and father into the kitchen. As PAUL puts the small package on the counter, he declares:)* 'Therefore, I cannot be held responsible for any damage to your olfactory nerves! *(He unwraps:)* Ta-dah! French cheese. *(He acts the part of a French missionary.)* Bonjour, Madame. Et que voulez-vous aujourd'hui? Du fromage? Eh, bien, nous avons du camembert, du gruyère, et un peu de babybel. Do you know there are over 350 kinds of cheeses in France? Think about that. One kind for every member of the Mo Tab. *(ALICE makes a face in response to the smell of the camembert.)* Now do you see why I didn't want to send these along in the trunk? That took a month and a half to get here. Anyway, Mom, add this to the dinner menu tonight.

ALICE. None of this . . . is bad . . . is it?

PAUL. No. Just smells that way.

ALICE. If you say so . . .

*(ALICE exits into the kitchen with the cheese. PAUL goes back to the trunk.)*

ROBERT. You're looking good, son.

PAUL. Thanks. So are you.

ROBERT. No, I mean it. So many young men come home from their missions all fat and out of shape.

PAUL. Well, I exercised every day. Didn't eat too many French pastries. Coming back a year early helped a lot, too, I guess.

ROBERT. You seem to have picked up the lingo pretty well.

PAUL. Yeah. Wouldn't that surprise Mrs. Holt? She thought I'd never learn French. *(Pause.)* Dad, when you were on a mission, did they ever play pranks on new missionaries?

ROBERT. Oh, yes, I suppose—

PAUL. I bet they were never like the ones we pulled. This one happened to my first companion when he was a greenie. His first senior comp had this whole thing prearranged with one of the sisters in the local branch. Anyway, when

the greenie arrives at the train station, this sister comes up, dressed like a hooker. Anyway, she makes a pass at the greenie, who, of course, refuses. Then she makes a pass at the senior comp. Well, he looks at the greenie, says, "I'll meet you back at the apartment," and walks off with the girl.

ALICE. (*Entering.*) What in heaven's name are you talking about?

ROBERT. Oh, just some missionary high jinks, Mother.

ALICE. Paul, you didn't do anything like that, did you?

PAUL. (*Raising his arm to the square.*) Not on your life.

ALICE. I certainly hope not. Those kinds of things are not becoming of a missionary. (*Pause.*) Is that cheese going to affect everything else in the refrigerator?

PAUL. Don't worry about it.

ALICE. If it does, I'll make you clean out the entire refrigerator, all by yourself.

PAUL. As long as I can have all the leftovers.

ALICE. It's a deal.

ROBERT. (*Gestures to ALICE.*) Mother . . .

(*ALICE suddenly remembers something and exits.*)

PAUL. What's going on?

ROBERT. You just sit still, young man.

PAUL. Hey . . .

ROBERT. Hurry up, Mother. Paul's getting restless.

ALICE (*OFFSTAGE*). Coming!

(*She enters with a gaily wrapped package held behind her back.*)

ROBERT. Since we're all in a giving mood, we've got something for you.

PAUL. Me? What for?

ROBERT. What for? Because you're our son and we love you.

ALICE. Should I give a little fanfare?

PAUL. What's . . . ?

ROBERT. If you'd like.

ALICE. Ta-ta-ta-tah!

(*She doesn't know what else to do, so, all aflutter, gives PAUL the present.*)

PAUL. You guys didn't need to do this. You gave me enough. You paid for my mission—

ROBERT. Open it and quit complaining.

(*PAUL opens the present, lifts out a sport shirt.*)

PAUL. Wow! This is great!

ALICE. Your father picked it out.

ROBERT. Read the card.

PAUL. "Dear son, Welcome back to the real world!" Thanks. My first gentile shirt.

ALICE. I hope it fits. I wasn't sure if your size had changed.

(*PAUL sees something in the pocket.*)

PAUL. What's this? (*ROBERT gestures to ALICE. They both watch in silence as PAUL takes out an envelope and opens it. PAUL's expression changes to one of dismay as he reads it.*) I don't understand.

ROBERT. An all-expense-paid scholarship to BYU! What do you think of that?

PAUL. I . . . I don't know what to think. How—?

ROBERT. I have friends on the Board of Trustees, you know.

PAUL. Thanks . . . but . . . (*ROBERT looks at ALICE, then back to PAUL.*) I'm not sure I want to go to BYU.

ROBERT. (*Pause.*) I see.

PAUL. I . . . probably should have told you when you mentioned it before.

ALICE. May we ask why, Paul?

ROBERT. Brigham Young has always been our school. For three generations—

PAUL. I'm just not sure if that's where I want to go—

ROBERT. Where else is there?

PAUL. Lots of places. The U of U. There are some good schools in California—

ROBERT. (*Blasphemy!*) California? (*In control.*) But BYU is all you ever talked about before your mission.

PAUL. A lot has happened in a year. I've changed my mind about a lot of things.

ROBERT. That's obvious!

PAUL. Father!

ROBERT. Sorry. (*New tactic.*) But . . . uh . . . now that your mission is over, you'll be wanting to get married. What better place to find a wife than among the choice daughters of Zion. (*PAUL says nothing.*) You don't want to get married?

PAUL. Yes! But not right away. I . . . I want to think about it first.

ROBERT. That's reasonable. Commendable. Marriage is important. You shouldn't rush into it. (*Pause.*) Just don't wait too long.

PAUL. I don't know how long it'll take. I want to be sure.

ROBERT. I mean . . . there are certain . . . urges in a young man . . . that are very powerful . . .

PAUL. You mean, "It's better to marry than to burn."

ROBERT. Your namesake couldn't have said it better.

PAUL. If and when I do marry, it won't be to legitimize my lust.

ROBERT. I wasn't saying—

PAUL. I know. I just want both my brain and my heart to play a role in the marriage decision.

ROBERT. And they should. Most definitely they should. I couldn't agree more.  
So BYU is out of the picture?

PAUL. Not totally—

ROBERT. Do you know what kind of people they have down there in California?

PAUL. I certainly do. One of my companions was from LA. The most spiritual elder I ever met...

ROBERT. I'm not talking about the California Saints, though some of them tend to be a bit liberal. But the other people...

PAUL. What about the "other" people?

ROBERT. They're... well, they just don't... uh... look at life the same way we do.

PAUL. Not many people do.

ROBERT. Their standards aren't as high as ours...

PAUL. And I might be corrupted, is that what you're...

ROBERT. No, of course not. You're stronger than that. I know that. But Satan's influence is powerful...

PAUL. Since when is BYU a paragon of virtue?

ROBERT. Granted, BYU has problems... like everywhere else. But they're not as widespread. It's a safer environment, that's all I'm saying.

PAUL. Have you ever thought that I might be a good influence to these "corrupted" Californians?

ROBERT. I wouldn't be surprised. You've always had great leadership skills. But it's not wise to play with fire. *(Pause.)* I just think you should reconsider BYU.

PAUL. I will. I told you, I haven't decided for sure yet. *(Pause.)* Until I do, maybe you should keep this. *(He hands ROBERT the scholarship.)* And thanks for the shirt. Sincerely. I really like it.

ALICE. You're welcome, son.

*(Awkward pause. PAUL stands.)*

PAUL. I'm a little tired. Jet lag, I guess. I'd like to lie down for a while.

ALICE. Have a nice nap.

PAUL. Thanks, Mom, the sandwiches were great. Rat-hair baloney and all.

*(PAUL kisses her on the forehead. That isn't enough for her—she pulls him into a hug.)*

ALICE. I want my Paul Hug.

*(PAUL hugs her, then leaves.)*

ROBERT. I know they're supposed to change on their missions, but... I can't believe this. Did you notice how defensive he was?

ALICE. I wouldn't call it "defensive." "Careful," maybe.

ROBERT. But what has he got to be careful or defensive about? Before he left on his mission, we could talk about anything at any time. Now I can't get a straight answer out of him.

ALICE. I think he just needs some time to unwind.

ROBERT. Well, I hope that's all it is. Did you notice how he warms up to you and how he—tenses up—when he talks to me?

ALICE. No, I didn't.

ROBERT. I make him uncomfortable.

ALICE. Well, his father's never been a stake president before.

ROBERT. No, it's more than that.

ALICE. He might... be afraid to express his independence around you. Dear, you do give off a stern image.

ROBERT. I do? *(ALICE nods.)* But that's only when I'm speaking. It's my style, I suppose. But, surely, Paul doesn't think I don't have any compassion.

ALICE. I'm sure he doesn't.

ROBERT. Something happened to him while he was out there, Mother, to change his mind about things. A young man doesn't go on a mission with the bright hope of the gospel in his eyes and one year later ask to be released—for no reason. Maybe it's that girl—what was her name?

ALICE. Dominique.

ROBERT. Maybe he's gone and fallen in love.

ALICE. Why didn't he bring her back home with him?

ROBERT. Maybe he will, Mother. Maybe he will.

ALICE. It sounded to me like he didn't know what to do in that department.

ROBERT. You're probably right. I'm just grasping at straws. *(Frustrated.)* Why doesn't he tell us, Mother?

ALICE. In his own due time, I'm sure he will.

ROBERT. He must know how all this is affecting us. *(Pause.)* Maybe that's what he's trying to do. Some strange transference of guilt.

ALICE. Robert, you're not thinking...

ROBERT. I've seen some troubled missionaries do some strange things, Alice. For obvious reasons, we don't talk about it but we've had problems with some missionaries. This one missionary in the East Stake...

ALICE. Bob, I don't want to...

ROBERT. No, no. I'm not going to tell you his name. But some missionaries walked into class one morning in the MTC and found the chalked outline of a man's body on the floor, with a knife severing the heart. The missionary who drew that is in therapy now.

ALICE. How sad.

ROBERT. There's no denying that the extreme discipline of missionary work can take its toll on certain types of individuals. But Paul is not that type. He has four brothers who told him what the mission field was like. He went on that two-week mission when he was a priest. He got straight A's in seminary. He was more prepared than any missionary I know. So why? *(Pause.)* It's the influence of the world, that's what it is. Things were so much simpler when we were younger. We were more sheltered. The ways of the world were unknown to us. Everything was laid out before you in nice, neat little packages. If you were a boy, you went on a mission. There was no deciding what to do. It was expected. If you were a girl, you grew up to be a mother. It never even occurred to young LDS women of our day to pursue a career. Everyone was in his rightful place.

ALICE. Concessions have had to be made.

ROBERT. I know. But how are we ever going to be a Zion people if we make concessions all the time?

ALICE. They stopped polygamy. Wasn't that a concession?

ROBERT. That was a commandment of God on which depended the future of the Church.

ALICE. So maybe these . . . modern concessions are for the same reason. After all, Bob, whether we like it or not, this is the world we're living in.

ROBERT. But we don't have to be of the world as much as we are.

ALICE. Isn't it true that many of these concessions were directed by the prophets?

ROBERT. Yes, but what caused the changes? That's the key factor. The weakness, the vanity of the people. God gives us what we ask for—either to our exaltation or our damnation.

ALICE. All I know is that if Paul is doing anything wrong—if he's making any kind of mistake—he'll eventually come to see that. He'll be all right.

ROBERT. I certainly hope so, Mother.

*(The glass figurine PAUL gave ALICE sits on the coffee table. ALICE reaches down, picks it up. ROBERT sits in a chair, thumbing through the journal PAUL gave him.)*

ALICE. This is so delicate. I'm almost afraid to touch it. Wasn't it sweet of Paul? These gifts?

ROBERT. *(Absentminded.)* It certainly was.

ALICE. He's always been very thoughtful about things like this.

ROBERT. *(Still appears absentminded.)* Yes, he has.

ALICE. I'll never forget that time he brought home that handful of weeds and presented them to me as a bouquet of flowers.

ROBERT. You put them in a vase and we had to look at those dreadful things all through dinner.

ALICE. The other boys made fun of them and you told them to be quiet.

ROBERT. Well, he was so proud of them. As if they were the most artistically designed bouquet in the whole world. I couldn't stand to see him disappointed. *(ROBERT looks at the journal in his hands.)* He must have done something on his mission to be proud of if he went to all this trouble of having his journal typed up.

ALICE. I think it shows a lot of respect for you as his father. He may be too embarrassed to tell you how he feels, but he's certainly capable of showing it. *(ROBERT hasn't been listening because he's been reading in the journal. Now, he sets it aside, though open, stands up and moves away, overcome with emotion. ALICE reaches for the book. She reads aloud.)* "Got my copy of the stake newsletter today. Read Dad's talk. It really blew me away. He said something in there that I have a lot of difficulty believing. He was talking about young men going on missions and said, 'To any of you prospective missionaries who might be considering whether you should go on a mission or not, I address these words: My young brethren, you have no choice. The prophet has called you. You must go.'"

ROBERT. *(Pause.)* My son thinks I forced him to go on a mission.

ALICE. Well, you have to admit, those were strong words.

ROBERT. But they're true. The prophet said it's every young man's duty to go on a mission. That's pretty explicit language. When the prophet speaks, the thinking is done.

ALICE. Still there are ways to make that message a little more palatable.

ROBERT. All right, maybe I came on a little bit strong.

ALICE. Just a bit?

ROBERT. All right, a lot. But I was straight and to the point. You have to admit that. I was straight and to the point.

ALICE. So's an ice pick.

ROBERT. What are you saying?

ALICE. I'm saying that this Church is filled with millions of individuals. With millions of different ways of looking at the gospel. And your son is one of those individuals.

ROBERT. But isn't the purpose of the gospel to turn those individuals into one heart and soul?

ALICE. Some are a little harder than others.

ROBERT. Why does Paul have to be one of them? The other boys were never

like that. And Paul never was either. Until his mission.

ALICE. Do you remember, you told me once that Paul was your favorite?

ROBERT. Yes, yes.

ALICE. Could that have been because he was so different from the others?

Don't we all tend to stand behind a file leader who's distinctive? Look at Joseph Smith. No more individualistic a man could be found in his time. He couldn't fit into a mold. Brigham Young was another one. If that's the reason you love Paul so much—because he is so different, then making him fit into a mold would lessen your love . . . wouldn't it?

ROBERT. I don't know. I don't know anything anymore. I thought I understood Paul but I don't. Maybe I never did. I do know one thing; he doesn't understand me if he thinks I coerced him to go on a mission. I encouraged him. Maybe my language was a little—very harsh—but . . . I haven't been a stake president very long. I haven't learned the finesse of some of the other brethren. Maybe I was over enthusiastic, but it's only because I so want Paul to do the right thing. I so want him to be happy.

ALICE. Even if what makes him happy differs from what you expect? Bob, all things considered, he is our son.

ROBERT. When I was called to my first position of leadership—elders quorum president—President Jameson pulled a piece of string out of his pocket and laid it on the desk between us. "Brother Baines," he said, "I want you to push that piece of string across the desk to me and keep it perfectly straight." I tried and, of course, it just crumpled up under the pressure. "Now try and pull it from the front and keep it straight." That was much easier. "As you lead the brethren in your quorum," he told me, "don't stand behind them and push. Stand in front and gently, ever so gently, pull them toward you." (Pause.) I've tried to do that all my life. I've never forced anyone to obey the gospel. Where does Paul get the idea that I have? Mother, I'm trying to understand him. Believe me, I'm trying.

ALICE. I know you are, dear. And remember, the most important thing you can do is let Paul tell you why he came home. (Kisses him.) I need to clean up of the lunch things. (ALICE looks at ROBERT, sees something in his face, an indication that he isn't listening to her, that he's decided something. She tries to stop him as he heads toward the phone.) Robert, don't . . .

(ROBERT punches in eleven numbers.)

ROBERT. Hello, this is President Robert Baines. Elder Paul Baines's father. Is President Andrews in? (Pause.) Well, then, could you leave him a message to call me? Thank you.

(He hangs up. Turning, he notices PAUL and ALICE.)

PAUL. You won't even allow me the dignity of telling you myself, will you? Well, I'm going to, anyway.

ALICE. Paul, you don't . . .

PAUL. Yes, I do, Mother. You wanted me to tell you about Frère DuChamp.

All right, I will. But first, let me tell you about my last companion. Elder Wainwright was my first greenie, a farm boy from Salem, Utah. Spent his whole life on the farm. As innocent as they come. The very first door he ever knocked on, the lady slammed it in his face. He just stood there for a moment, overcome with shock. "What's the matter?" I said. I thought maybe he had narcolepsy or something. "I can't believe it," he said. "She didn't want to hear about the Church. How can anyone not want to know about the Church?" It wasn't just a question he tossed out to keep the conversation going between doors. He was actually flabbergasted! "You find that surprising?" I asked. He said, "I've never known anybody who wasn't a Mormon. I don't understand how anybody can live without the gospel." So let me tell you about Frère DuChamp. We found him about a month and a half later. It was nine-thirty at night and it seemed like the rain had been coming down in solid sheets. We were soaked to the skin and probably should have been home in our warm beds, but there we were, thoughts of the pioneers running through our heads, along with strains of "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Onward, ever onward, in the grand tradition of Paul, Ammon, Parley P. Pratt, to spread the Word at all costs. There was one building left in this particular complex we'd been tracting. As we approached, I admit to having had second thoughts, thinking that maybe, since it was so late, we should go home. But then I remembered something they'd taught us at the MTC: "When you want to go home, just knock on one last door. The golden convert you seek may be waiting." So that's what I did. I knocked on just one more door. This little man answered the door. He was maybe in his thirties and his eyes seemed to brighten as he looked at us. Well, we did the usual spiel . . . and that was when he broke into tears . . . It turns out he'd been praying for God to send someone with the truth about religion to his door. He was indeed the golden contact we'd been seeking. He took all the lessons and was baptized the following Saturday. After his baptism, we were at his home for a little celebration. He went to the refrigerator and brought out some kind of cola drink. He put the bottle down as if it had suddenly caught fire and looked at my companion and me with the most woeful look on his face. "Is this against the Word of



Wisdom? If it is, just tell me and I'll never drink it again. I'll do whatever you tell me." I just couldn't bear . . . *(Pauses, unable to speak for a moment.)* Finally, I called up President Andrews. This is why I came home. Because of a farm boy from Idaho to whom the very idea of a happy non-Mormon was incomprehensible and because of a little Frenchman who was willing to alter his entire lifestyle merely because I said so.

ROBERT. But Brother DuChamp was baptized months ago.

PAUL. It wasn't an easy decision to make, Dad. I had to think about it for a while.

ROBERT. Maybe you should have . . .

PAUL. I did. *(Pause.)* Like I said. It's all in the journal.

*(He starts to go.)*

ROBERT. Where are you going?

PAUL. Wherever I want to.

*(PAUL exits. ROBERT stands at the door. He turns. ALICE comes to him. He takes her in his arms. When ROBERT and ALICE break their embrace, ROBERT goes to the window, looks out.)*

ROBERT. He's been going through a rebellious stage, that's all. He's been trained well. He'll cool off, then come back and apologize. After a few days he'll probably ask to finish out his mission.

ALICE. "He's been trained well." You make him sound like a circus animal.

ROBERT. I was just paraphrasing scripture: "Train up a child in the path to follow, and he will not depart therefrom."

ALICE. Kelly Thorenson did. He had good parents.

ROBERT. That's an isolated case—

ALICE. Lehi had two sons who never came back.

ROBERT. Yes . . .

ALICE. Elohim had a rebellious son.

ROBERT. Alice, are you siding with him and his radical ideas?

ALICE. What's so radical about a son wanting his father to love him?

ROBERT. My love for him is not the issue here. He obviously feels he's been coerced into going on his mission.

ALICE. Hasn't he?

ROBERT. You sound as though you're condoning his actions.

ALICE. I'm not condoning anything. I just think I know how he feels.

ROBERT. What do you mean?

ALICE. Robert, it's . . . very difficult living in the shadow of a great man.

ROBERT. *(Haltingly, pained.)* You, too?

ALICE. Don't think I don't support you—

ROBERT. I can't very well ask to be released simply because my family finds it difficult to live with me.

ALICE. And I'm not asking you to.

ROBERT. I know. I know. This thing with Paul has me so upset, I don't know what I'm saying anymore . . .

ALICE. We'll figure out Paul together.

ROBERT. That's really the only way, isn't it? *(Pause.)* So what do you think? What's Paul's problem?

ALICE. I think it's exactly what he says it is. He doesn't feel he can handle the responsibility for someone else's life.

ROBERT. When he said, "I'm going wherever I want to go"? When he left in a huff? And there's that passage in his journal. I think he's making some stand for independence.

ALICE. That, too.

ROBERT. Then I'm worried. Because the independent thinker has no place in the Church. "Let Thy will be done." Not ours. The whole plan of the Church is to subjugate our own egos to the Lord's. If Paul can't do that, then he's in for a difficult time the rest of his life. I wish President Andrews would call back.

ALICE. You should have let Paul tell you when he was ready.

ROBERT. So you're saying I made my own son leave this house?

ALICE. Don't be so hard on yourself. I'm sure I'm part of the problem, too.

ROBERT. You?

ALICE. And his brothers. We're all a family. We're all responsible to some degree for whatever's happening to Paul. He's zeroed in on you because you're the most visible.

ROBERT. Alice, I don't want to lose him. I love him.

*(PAUL enters around the downstage corner of the house. During the following exchange, PAUL makes his way to the azalea bush, stands looking at it. He does not hear his parents discussing him.)*

ALICE. Then when he comes back, why don't you tell him?

ROBERT. He knows I love him.

ALICE. Does he?

ROBERT. It should be quite evident, I would think, after all these years. I've told him many times before. I've spent quality time with him. I've had personal priesthood interviews with him. We've played handball together. Exactly what I've done with all the other boys.

ALICE. But Paul isn't like the other boys. We've already established that. He needs to be treated differently. You need to let him be himself, right or wrong.

ROBERT. He's only twenty years old and is obviously not capable of making correct choices.

ALICE. Paul isn't some hardened criminal you're letting loose on society. He's a highly intelligent, spiritual young man who's going through some real emotional problems right now.

ROBERT. Why do I feel like it's you and him versus the mean ogre of a dad?

ALICE. I'm not taking sides. I can't take sides where matters of the heart are concerned. I love you both. I want you both to be happy, but each in your own way. And you're not a mean ogre. A little stubborn around the edges, maybe . . .

ROBERT. *(Pause.)* You know what I'd like, Alice? It's strange, because I haven't thought of this for many years, at least not since my mission. I wish that, somehow, I could just take everything that's in my heart and soul, everything I know and feel about this glorious Church and transfer it wholesale into Paul. If he could only see the great vision of this work as I do there'd be no problem, no conflict between us.

ALICE. And no growth.

ROBERT. *(Slight laugh.)* "Oh, that I were an angel," said Alma, who later realized he had sinned in his desire.

*(ROBERT stands looking out the plate glass window. PAUL enters from the side fence, crosses over, kneels to look at the azalea bush. ROBERT goes out, stands in silence behind his son. ALICE follows. Pause. Without turning:)*

PAUL. I . . . I just had to walk around for a little while.

ROBERT. That's all right.

*(PAUL stands.)*

PAUL. What was it you said about planting an azalea bush? "I knew that as it matured in my garden, that you would be maturing in another field."

ROBERT. Paul, you don't . . .

PAUL. When I saw you on the telephone to President—

ROBERT. Son, I'm sorry about that. I should have waited and let you tell me.

PAUL. This whole thing—my coming home early—must have been a great shock to you.

*(ROBERT puts his arm around PAUL as they move toward the house.)*

ROBERT. It did concern us somewhat.

PAUL. Dad, you always were one for understatement when it came to expressing yourself. Admit it: my coming home early blew you away.

ROBERT. Well, I wouldn't say it in those words . . .

PAUL. Come on, now.

ROBERT. All right. It blew me away.

PAUL. Did you cry, Dad?

ROBERT. I . . . suppose . . .

PAUL. Did you?

ROBERT. I was disappointed, and . . . uh . . . yes, I did cry a bit.

*(ALICE comes over, hugs PAUL.)*

ALICE. I know I did.

PAUL. Would it surprise you to know that I did, too? The night I decided to go home, I just lay in bed staring at the ceiling for the longest time. When it finally came to me that—whatever else I was—I just wasn't cut out to be a missionary . . . I cried. Because, more than anything, I wanted to be! I wanted to do such a good job, to please the Lord, you and Mom . . . myself. *(Beat.)* And after what seemed like maybe a half hour . . . this absolutely incredible feeling of peace swept over me. It started at the exact center of my chest and seemed to swirl outward—this fantastic feeling of . . . warmth that left my entire body tingling. And the more I thought about going home, the better it felt. When I thought that maybe I ought to reconsider, to stay, it started to fade. *(Beat.)* I didn't cry after that.

ROBERT. Are you telling me that God told you to come home early from your mission?

PAUL. I won't propose to speak for God. That's your job! *(Softer now.)* I'm just telling you that I felt good about my decision. I told you this because I think you'll come to feel good about it, too . . . in time.

*(ALICE tries to avert what she senses is coming.)*

ALICE. We're just glad you're home safe.

PAUL. Anyway, that's it. When I told President Andrews how I felt, when I was able to convince him that my wanting to leave wasn't just a case of homesickness, he agreed to send me home. I didn't want him to tell you because . . . because I knew how it might sound out of context.

*(ROBERT is seething now but still in control.)*

ROBERT. So that's it? The reason you came home early? Explained "in context"?

ALICE. Robert—

ROBERT. Son, about this Brother DuChamp and your missionary companion. You know, you can't judge the truthfulness of the Church by the actions of a few.

PAUL. *(Exasperated.)* You still don't understand, do you? You think I'm judging the Church, that I've lost my testimony or something?

ROBERT. You said you came home because of them . . .

PAUL. That doesn't mean I lost my testimony of the Church. Or of missionary

work, for that matter. If I lost anything, it was the testimony of myself. When I first got out—full of missionary zeal, determined to convert the world . . . I'd always been taught that the gospel was the only true path to happiness. But the longer I was over in France, the more French people I met who were content, absolutely content in their way of life—I even taught a man once who told me that the Holy Ghost had told him his church was true—

ROBERT. There are many sincere deluded people in the world.

PAUL. And then when Frère DuChamp told me what he did—that his eternal salvation rested in whatever I told him to do, I couldn't take it. Dad, I could hardly govern my own life, let alone the life of another person. To have someone follow me blindly when I could hardly see the way myself . . . I just wasn't ready for that.

ROBERT. Many recent converts exhibit such blind faith. The more mature they become, the more sure of themselves they become, the more they begin to think for themselves.

PAUL. Unless you're a young man going on a mission.

ROBERT. That's different. That's a direct call from the prophet.

PAUL. Is it? The prophet individually calls every missionary?

ROBERT. I don't claim to understand how inspiration works in every situation. But I've heard many young men bear testimony that, as far their personal growth was concerned, their mission came at just the right time, or they were sent to just the right place—

PAUL. I don't doubt that. I just know it didn't happen to me. I felt good about my decision to come home, that's all I can say.

ROBERT. Maybe you should have given your mission more of a chance . . .

PAUL. That's your solution to everything, isn't it? Whatever's wrong with the world, the gospel can fix.

ROBERT. No one's ever claimed the gospel was a magic curative. People have to use it correctly.

PAUL. And how do they do that, if not by using their agency?

ROBERT. You're right—

PAUL. So do you see the dilemma? On the one hand, the Church tells people to follow the prophet: "He will not allow you to be led astray." On the other hand, we're told to use our agency, to let the Spirit tell us what to do.

ROBERT. What do you think your agency is, if not the freedom to follow the prophet?

PAUL. (*Another approach.*) Dad, why was the War in Heaven fought?

ROBERT. You know the answer to that.

PAUL. It wasn't just because Lucifer wanted the glory of God, but because he wanted to FORCE PEOPLE TO BE GOOD! I think sometimes we get the impression that Lucifer's plan was to make us do horrible things against our will. But that wasn't it at all. He wanted to make us pay tithing. He wanted to make us go on missions, WHETHER WE WANTED TO OR NOT! (*Pause, softer.*) Can't you see that, even if it's for a good reason, no man should force another?

ROBERT. Neither I, nor anyone else, forced you to go on a mission!

PAUL. There are more subtle ways, more sure ways to force people. Peer pressure: "All my friends are going on missions. I guess I should go." Intimidation: "My young brethren, you have no choice!" Dad, I'm not saying that guys shouldn't go on missions. They should. If they want to.

ROBERT. You're beginning to sound like one of those Mormon intellectuals who—

PAUL. "The glory of God is intelligence."

ROBERT. A questioning mind is a faithless mind.

PAUL. "Let us reason together." Have you heard that passage before? With what do you reason if not your mind—your intellect?

ROBERT. Your intellect tempered with the Spirit. And when your reasoning disagrees with the revealed word of God, then your reasoning is faulty.

PAUL. Then what do you do if "the revealed word of God" differs with other "revealed words of God"?

ROBERT. Now you're talking nonsense.

PAUL. Am I? Brigham Young said, on many occasions, "You cannot get to the highest degree of heaven if you only have one wife." But today, if you marry another woman, you're ex-ed. Two diametrically opposed statements. Which one's right?

ROBERT. They both are.

PAUL. Now you're talking nonsense.

ROBERT. Brigham Young's statement was true for his time.

PAUL. But isn't God an unchanging god, the "same yesterday, today, or forever"? Why two different doctrines a hundred years apart?

ROBERT. It's the same doctrine—the same principal—just the way of practicing it differs. Principals never change. Practices do.

PAUL. Maybe. But do the Saints know that? You should hear some of the incredible lengths people go to to make it look like tithing, the Word of Wisdom, and Sunday School have always existed.

ROBERT. You can say what you like, but the Church is true and the prophet will

never lead us astray. That's all that matters to me. That's my iron rod.

PAUL. Then if the prophet can do no wrong . . .

ROBERT. I didn't say that. No one is perfect. But God would not allow him to teach false doctrine.

PAUL. Then why does the Doctrine and Covenants provide for a court to try the prophet? If he could never lead us astray, there would be no need for a court. Look at the Book of Mormon—

ROBERT. Mother, are you noticing? First he blasphemes the prophet. Now it's the scriptures.

PAUL. If the Book of Mormon is without flaw, if there can be no mistake in it—

ROBERT. There have been typographical—

PAUL. Then why did Joseph Smith call it the "most correct book"? Why does it say on the title page, "If there be mistakes, they are the mistakes of men." If prophets can't make mistakes, then why the disclaimer?

ROBERT. So you're saying the prophet is just like any other men?

PAUL. No, I'm not! He's a very inspired human being, whose very opinion I highly praise. But I have to reserve the right to decide for myself on his or anybody else's teaching. If I can't have that right, then agency is a joke. Then the War in Heaven never happened. *(Pause.)* Do you think I like what's happened to me? Sure, I felt good about coming home but I didn't feel good about what it would do to you—what you would think of me . . . *(ALICE tries to intervene.)* Mother, I know how he feels. And though I know that, in my particular case—as far as I'm concerned—I've done the right thing by coming home, it causes me no pleasure to know that I've been a disappointment to both of you.

ALICE. Paul . . .

PAUL. There's no use denying it, Mother! You know as well as I do that, in this society, a missionary who comes home early is just one step above a divorced woman in the hierarchy of "people with whom it is not wise to associate." Do you think I look forward to that stereotype for the rest of my life?

ALICE. Paul, no true Latter-day Saint would feel that way . . .

PAUL. I'm not condemning the Church. It's just a few individuals. But many of those individuals are in leadership positions, and they're influencing others to the same closed-minded kind of thinking.

ROBERT. All right, you've said your piece. Now let me give you my impressions of your experience. But first, I want you to know that this comes from the innermost depths of my love for you. And I hope you perceive it that way. *(Pause.)* You know perfectly well that there are many lying and deceiving

spirits in the world today. And that, in the last days, they will deceive and lead astray even the very elect.

PAUL. Yes, but . . .

ROBERT. Please, Paul, let me continue. You said you felt good about your decision to come home. Isn't it just possible, isn't there just the slightest chance, that what you felt was a clever imitation?

PAUL. What is this? You think I'm possessed or something?

ALICE. Dear, what are you trying to say?

ROBERT. Isn't that possible?

PAUL. No.

ROBERT. Have you ever felt similar "good feelings"?

PAUL. No . . .

ROBERT. Then you have nothing to compare this to, do you?

PAUL. Well, no . . .

ROBERT. Then it could have been a Satanic imitation, couldn't it?

ALICE. *(Shocked.)* Bob!

PAUL. I know what I felt!

ROBERT. But with nothing to compare it to, you have no way of knowing for sure that you received a manifestation from God or from some other source, do you?

PAUL. I never said it came from God in the first place. I just know that I felt good afterwards.

ROBERT. Son, the devil and his angels swing into high gear with missionaries and those in other positions of authority. They pull out all the stops and will do anything they can to discourage the servants of the Lord. *(Pause.)* I know. *(Pause.)* Because it happened to me. *(This drops like a lead balloon in the room.)* It was just after I got my call to the stake presidency. Do you remember the day it happened, Mother?

ALICE. I'll never forget it.

ROBERT. When we got back from the interview, we just sat around the house for the longest while, not saying anything. I suppose I must have looked miserable because your mother asked me, "Who died?" "Me," I said. "My old self has died. I'll never be the same again." Soon, thoughts started running through my head, thoughts such as, "Who do you think you are, Robert Baines? You, a stake president? Ha!" I began to doubt, thinking of all the things I still had to do, of the change in my status in the eyes of my neighbors and friends. I, Robert M. Baines, would soon have the responsibility of speaking in the name of Jesus Christ to the entire stake, "as if from mine

own mouth," the scripture says. I felt woefully inadequate. I went so far as to actually pick up the phone to tell them I couldn't do it. But I hung up, got down on my knees (*which he does now*) right there in my office, and prayed until the horrible feeling was replaced by an overwhelming feeling of peace—true peace. Not transitory peace. Not false peace. But the kind of peace that can only come from Christ. (*Looks at PAUL.*) Kneel with me, Paul. (*PAUL stands.*) Alice, kneel with me and, Paul, and let's pray—let's each of us pray that the veil might be lifted from your eyes, that you might see the error of your ways. Paul, kneel with me. Alice. (*ALICE kneels*) Come on, Paul.

PAUL. No.

ROBERT. Then Mother and I will pray. (*ROBERT takes ALICE's hand. She looks at PAUL, begging him with her eyes to join them; he doesn't. She then bows her head as ROBERT starts praying.*) Our Father in Heaven, we humbly kneel before thee at this time—

PAUL. What are you trying to do?

ROBERT. —with a desire in our hearts that thou wilt shed Thy Spirit upon this household that our son Paul, whom we both love more than life itself, may see the error of his ways, that he may repent of his weak faith—

PAUL. Please, stop . . .

ROBERT. —and recommit himself to the high and holy calling, which is his, of proclaiming Thy word to the inhabitants of this mortal sphere—

PAUL. Dad, please . . .

ROBERT. Let him once again feel Thy love for him, that whatever evil influence hath overtaken him may be purged from his soul forever.

PAUL. I know what you're trying to do!

ROBERT. That he may return to full worthiness in Thy church and kingdom—

PAUL. WILL YOU SHUT UP, DAMMIT!

(*Silence. ALICE breaks into tears, gets up, and moves away. ROBERT stays on his knees.*)

ROBERT. And forgive our son his sacrilege. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. (*ROBERT stands, moves to his son. Pause.*) What has made your heart so hard?

PAUL. It's not hard. How can it be . . . when it's broken in two?

(*PAUL, barely able to hold back his anger, strides across the room and out the back door. ALICE casts a killer glance at ROBERT, who is not looking at her. The phone rings once, twice before it is answered by ALICE.*)

ALICE. Hello?

(*She holds out the phone to ROBERT.*)

ROBERT. Hello. (*Pause.*) You think so? All right, I'll be right down. No, no.

'That's all right. I wasn't doing anything important.

(*He hangs up the phone, goes to the front door to get his keys, turns to tell ALICE where's he going, thinks better of it, then turns to go out the front door. He sees PAUL's journal sitting on the coffee table, picks it up, then goes out the door. PAUL stands at the edge of the garden, looking away. Sound of garage door opening and car driving away. ALICE crosses down to PAUL, looks down, sees something on the ground, picks it up. PAUL walks toward her.*)

ALICE. He left his trowel out here. Somebody might trip over it.

PAUL. I heard him leave—

ALICE. The man at the nursery called. They spoke for a few minutes . . .

PAUL. (*Looking at the azalea bush.*) Maybe it needs more water.

ALICE. He waters it every day.

PAUL. Maybe it gets too much.

ALICE. Did you know there's a history behind each of these plants?

PAUL. He likes to tell us, doesn't he?

(*She moves down the row. PAUL follows.*)

ALICE. Whenever some milestone is reached in his life, he'll plant a shrub or a flower. This one is when David was born. This was when your father sold his first insurance policy. (*She stops at the azalea bush.*) And you know what this one is for.

PAUL. It's the only bush that's dying. Isn't that interesting?

ALICE. Your father is happiest when he's out here in the garden. He says it gives him time to think about things.

PAUL. I tried growing a little garden in one of the places I lived. I guess I didn't inherit his green thumb because nothing edible came up.

ALICE. I can't seem to make anything grow, either. I asked your father about that once. "Alice, it's more than just digging a hole and dropping in a seed. You've got to nurture these plants. And that means a lot of 'TLC.'" Tender Loving Care—that's the difference, I guess. (*Pause.*) You know your father's a frustrated gardener.

PAUL. Yeah . . .

ALICE. That's what he wanted to do when we first got married, did you know that? Open up his own nursery.

PAUL. Really? Then how did he ever get into insurance?

ALICE. That was because of me. I wouldn't let him become a gardener. It was our first . . . disagreement.

PAUL. What do you mean, you wouldn't let him?

ALICE. Security. I wanted the steady income—not that insurance was steadier,

but it had more potential. I felt uneasy not knowing where our next meal was coming from. *(Pause.)* Security. A word that's probably killed more dreams than anything else.

PAUL. How come I never knew about this?

*(ALICE looks up, suddenly realizing what she has done.)*

ALICE. Oh no!

PAUL. Something wrong?

ALICE. I . . . uh . . . your father . . .

PAUL. Don't tell me, I can guess. He never wanted you to tell us. *(ALICE nods.)*

Why is that man so afraid of anybody seeing his weaknesses?

ALICE. He believes that being an example—

PAUL. It can drive you crazy, that's what being an example can do. Never doing anything because you're afraid someone looking over your shoulder will misconstrue your actions and you'll be responsible for them going inactive or something.

ALICE. As he often tells me: "Avoid the appearance of evil."

PAUL. So Dad was afraid we'd figure he was weak because he gave in to his wife?

ALICE. He didn't "give in." He agreed with me.

PAUL. I bet he wouldn't call it that.

ALICE. Maybe so. Your father's a complex man, Paul. It's not easy to point at any one thing and say, "This is Robert Baines."

PAUL. *(Pause.)* So, how's it been? This "security" that Dad "agreed" to?

ALICE. As far as I'm concerned, wonderful. I've been able to feed and clothe five sons. He's given me a marvelous house. For me, it's all I asked for.

PAUL. But for him?

ALICE. For him? I don't know. Maybe he's gotten used to it.

PAUL. Maybe.

ALICE. At least I hope he has.

*(A pause. She cries softly. PAUL takes her in his arms.)*

PAUL. Hey, Mom! What is it?

ALICE. Nothing.

PAUL. Teenage girls cry over nothing.

ALICE. Paul, you don't think—? It just suddenly occurred to me that maybe he never has gotten used to it.

PAUL. Has he ever told you that?

ALICE. No. And he never would. He'd keep it inside. He'd never let on.

PAUL. You know what I think? I think you're upset over what's happening between Dad and me.

ALICE. Should I not be? Two men whom I love both trying to force their differing philosophies on the other.

PAUL. I wasn't . . . *(ALICE looks at him.)* Maybe I was. *(Pause.)* What do you think, Mom? I know how Dad feels about my coming home early. He made that clear enough. But what do you think?

ALICE. You're my son, whatever you do.

PAUL. You're saying you love me even though I did the wrong thing?

ALICE. *(Pause.)* Yes.

PAUL. *(Moving away.)* I thought for sure you'd understand.

ALICE. I do understand. I'm not sure you do, though.

PAUL. It did get pretty heavy there for a while, didn't it?

ALICE. Paul, he was in the middle of a prayer. You shouldn't have interrupted him in the middle of a prayer.

PAUL. He wasn't praying. He was intimidating. I won't be intimidated anymore.

ALICE. Paul, your father only—

PAUL. "—wants what's good for me." But why is what he thinks is good for me different from what I think?

ALICE. You interrupted me. I was going to say that he only wants so desperately for you to make the right choices.

PAUL. As he sees what's right.

ALICE. Would that be so wrong? After all, he's had many years of experience in the Church . . .

PAUL. Which only proves he's learned to toe the party line.

ALICE. Is there anything wrong with that?

PAUL. Yeah. If you're doing it because everybody else is.

ALICE. And you think that's what your father is doing?

PAUL. I'm not going to judge him.

ALICE. *(Pause.)* All right, let's pretend you're not judging him.

PAUL. Mom—

ALICE. Just tell me. Do you think your father is "toeing the party line," as you call it, just because everybody else is?

PAUL. No, of course not. I have no doubt he's absolutely sincere in the way he feels.

ALICE. But "wrong," is that what you're saying?

PAUL. I'm not going to answer that. Everyone's entitled to his own opinion.

ALICE. Even if it's a wrong opinion?

PAUL. Who's wrong? Who's right? That's what our whole argument was about in the first place.



ALICE. You must have some opinion. Even the most liberal-minded Mormon must have some opinion of what's right and wrong.

PAUL. I don't want to say he's wrong . . . I . . . can't say what I really think.

ALICE. Why can't you?

PAUL. Because . . . because it'll sound terribly conceited.

ALICE. Maybe I won't see it that way.

PAUL. Have you heard of that passage in the New Testament: "When I was a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man . . ."

ALICE. ". . . I put away childish things." Something else by Paul.

PAUL. Well, when I used to have this absolute, unwavering faith, I . . . I was like a child.

ALICE. But now you've matured beyond that.

PAUL. Well, not matured, really. Not progressed, either. "Changed," I guess is the only word.

ALICE. There's another scripture you're forgetting about. I can't quote it exactly, but I know you'll have heard of it: "Except ye be as a little child, ye can in no wise enter the kingdom of God."

PAUL. I can't go back to the way I was. I can't just forget everything I've learned. I've tried.

ALICE. Maybe you should have told that to your father. Maybe if he saw how much agony this is causing you . . .

PAUL. He wouldn't listen. He only gives Tender Loving Care to his plants.

ALICE. At least his plants don't turn against him.

PAUL. Is that what you think, that I'm rebelling against Dad? I guess I didn't make myself clear.

ALICE. It was hard to find clarity in all that yelling.

PAUL. I tried to do it calmly, but when he wouldn't listen, I just . . . lost control, I guess.

ALICE. That's a good guess.

PAUL. It was my fault, wasn't it? The shouting match.

ALICE. Does it matter whose fault it was? What matters is how it made you feel.

PAUL. Well, it didn't turn out exactly the way I wanted it to. Not even close.

ALICE. How did you want it to turn out?

PAUL. I knew there'd be . . . communication . . . problems, but the reason I asked President Andrews not to say anything is because I wanted to confront those problems myself. I like to fight my own battles.

ALICE. And boy, can you fight.

PAUL. What I expected was, I'd come home, it'd be a little tense at first, but

eventually everyone would relax a bit . . . and then I'd tell him.

ALICE. And he would understand, just like that?

PAUL. I guess it was kind of naïve of me, wasn't it?

ALICE. You know, dear, those people who can totally change their lives instantly are very rare.

PAUL. I know that.

ALICE. For most of us, any change at all must come over a long period. With your father, that period is longer than with almost anyone.

PAUL. But he's changed—before? There must have been at least one time.

ALICE. There was. It was when I was pregnant with Andrew. Before that, whenever we went anyplace, your father would always drive the car. It was the unwritten law of the Baines household: The Man Shall Drive. I had a license but he never let me use it when he was in the car. I asked him about it one time. I can't remember his exact words, but it was something to the effect that women, not being as mechanically inclined as men, weren't as good of drivers.

PAUL. (*Almost mocking.*) That's unbelievable.

ALICE. Remember, your father was raised in Utah. Well, when it came time to deliver Andrew, your father was nowhere to be found. So I borrowed a neighbor's car and drove to the hospital myself. When your father learned that not only had I delivered a healthy baby boy, but that I had driven there safely, he turned to me and said—and these words I do remember exactly—"I always knew you could do it." I accepted that as an apology.

PAUL. And did he let you drive after that?

ALICE. Yes, but he'd always wear his seat belt, and this was before it was the law. So, you see, if you want to change the way he thinks—

PAUL. I need to have a baby.

ALICE. You need to be patient and work at it, maybe for quite a long time.

PAUL. Mom, will he ever understand? Will it ever be—between him and me—like it used to be?

ALICE. No. But I think—with work—you'll come pretty close. I will tell you one thing, though. When your father finally comes around, don't expect him to come right out and say it. He may be straight and to the point in his preaching but he'll skirt the issue, he'll say something else. It'll be up to you to see it for what it is: an apology. (*Pause.*) Now it's your turn.

PAUL. What?

ALICE. We've been talking about your father and his weaknesses, as if he's the only one involved in this disagreement.

PAUL. Yeah, but at least he's gone and can't hear what we say.

ALICE. But you're the open-minded one. So let's get philosophical . . .

PAUL. You don't have to do that. I can take it.

ALICE. Then I'll let you have it. You, in your "open-mindedness" were as letter-of-the-law as he was. You can no more accept his way of looking at things than he can accept yours.

PAUL. I'm more honest with myself than he is.

ALICE. Are you? When you accepted your mission call, you made a commitment to serve for two years. You didn't follow through on that. Does that seem honest to you?

PAUL. I told you, I had no choice. I was ramrodded into the mission field.

ALICE. You always have a choice. You chose to give in to this "intimidation" as you called it. You would have been more honest with yourself—and us—if you had never gone in the first place.

PAUL. I know that! But I couldn't do that—then. I didn't know what I know now.

ALICE. You know what this whole thing sounds like to me? One gigantic case of rationalization.

PAUL. Mom—!

ALICE. What else can I think? You go out in the mission field, excited, vowing to convert the world, and then when it gets a little tough, you tuck your tail between your legs and come home.

PAUL. Do you really believe that?

ALICE. I don't want to, but I've seen precious little else to convince me otherwise.

PAUL. I would have expected this from Dad . . .

ALICE. You see, you're not the only one in the Church who has your philosophy. I've known quite a few. But there's danger in your way of looking at the gospel, just as there is in wearing blinders all the time. The danger is that, unless you try very hard, you end up questioning everything. And eventually, believing nothing. And a life without belief is a life without hope.

PAUL. Everything I told Dad—

ALICE. Everything you screamed at him.

PAUL. You don't believe any of it?

ALICE. Do you?

PAUL. Let's not get into that again. I was not being influenced by the devil.

ALICE. How do you know that?

PAUL. I already told you how. I had this . . . feeling.

ALICE. Feeling. You mean you didn't sit down and reason out why you shouldn't be on a mission?

PAUL. I told you, I thought about it—

ALICE. If this feeling didn't come from Satan, or wasn't a result of your own feelings of inadequacy, then where did it come from?

PAUL. (*Reluctant.*) I see what you're getting at.

ALICE. Then say it.

PAUL. God.

ALICE. And how do you know that, if not by faith? Don't you see that, sometimes, reasoning is not enough, that even the most "intellectual" Mormon needs to take a step into the darkness every now and then? So what am I telling you? You've said it yourself several times now: "No one is either black or white." There are elements of questioning in all of us.

PAUL. In you?

ALICE. Yes.

(*Pause. PAUL looks at her. She starts to speak.*)

PAUL. I know. Don't tell Dad.

(*Another pause.*)

ALICE. I never thought I would tell that to anyone.

PAUL. I know what you're feeling. Kind of a strange mixture of relief and agony—coalescing somewhere at the base of your heart. You feel like you want to burst with joy now that you've finally come to terms with yourself but afraid that, if you do, nothing will come out but this oddly shaped, deformed mass that used to be called "perfect, childlike faith." (*ALICE looks at PAUL. Suddenly, she bursts into tears, folding into PAUL's arms.*) Let it come, Mom. Let it come.

ALICE. Paul. Promise me one thing. Whatever else you tell your father when he gets home, don't—

PAUL. I won't.

ALICE. Because it would destroy him. He already thinks that you and I are teaming up against him. If he found out that I . . . You know what he told me once? He said the reason he married me was . . . was because I was perfect. That's what he said. So, you mustn't.

PAUL. Don't worry.

ALICE. He just wouldn't know how to handle it. Not yet, anyway.

PAUL. Someday you'll have to do what I did. You'll have to tell him.

ALICE. I know.

PAUL. You know what I think?

ALICE. What?

PAUL. I think that every member of the Church questions things. But most are

afraid to admit it, as if by ignoring it, it'll go away. Or maybe they think if they stand up in testimony meeting and say, "I know the gospel's true, but I'm not sure about the Church," they'll somehow be judged as weak in the faith. *(Pause.)* What . . . sort of things do you question?

ALICE. So it's my turn, is it? Yes, I suppose I owe you an explanation.

PAUL. You do.

ALICE. You know how we're taught that—you won't think I'm an apostate, will you?

PAUL. Mom, you're talking to Mister Liberal-Minded.

ALICE. It's just that—well, I told this once to your father and he said I should stop thinking about it—that, since it wasn't essential to my salvation . . . I didn't need to be concerned.

PAUL. "It's not essential to my salvation." The Great Mormon Cop-Out.

ALICE. It has to do with . . . the Creation . . .

PAUL. Go on.

ALICE. Well, you know how we're taught that the world was created by Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael.

PAUL. Yes . . .

ALICE. Well, you see . . .

PAUL. Go ahead. There are no General Authorities looking over your shoulder.

ALICE. I don't think that's all there is to it. There are—aspects—of the Creation that carry a decidedly feminine slant. The flowers, for instance, rainbows, all the things of beauty. I'm not saying that a man couldn't have done all that, what I'm saying is, don't you think it's possible that maybe—Heavenly Mother could have designed those things and given them to her husband to create? Is that such an heretical idea?

PAUL. *(Smiles.)* I think it's a beautiful concept.

ALICE. Why are you smiling?

PAUL. I can't believe it. My mother, the Mormon Feminist.

ALICE. I'm not!

PAUL. Just kidding.

ALICE. You got me off the subject, which was you.

PAUL. An old missionary trick I learned to keep contacts from rambling.

ALICE. I wasn't rambling.

PAUL. I know, I know.

ALICE. Well, Mr. Open-Minded. Am I right? About you and your father, I mean?

PAUL. Well . . .

ALICE. Come on, now.

PAUL. Yes, you're right.

ALICE. So what we have here are two grown men who aren't willing to just throw doctrine to the wind and let love tell their hearts what to do.

PAUL. I don't know if we ever can. Our basic philosophies seem so diametrically opposed. He's an Iron Rodder and I'm a Liahona.

ALICE. What does that mean?

PAUL. You remember Dad saying that the words of the prophets were his iron rod? That's the one basic difference between people like him and me. Some are like in the parable of the iron rod. As long as they hold on tight, they don't have to worry about anything. They can make it through every mist in a clear, straight line to that beautiful tree. There are others of us who are better symbolized by the Liahona. We don't have the whole picture—feel more comfortable without it, as a matter of fact. We prefer to sort of figure out where we're going one step at a time. I was an Iron Rodder before I went on my mission. I'm now a Liahona. And you don't know how many sleepless nights I've spent praying that I could somehow undo what happened to me—that, in one fell swoop, I could be returned to those days when I had a simple faith. *(Pause.)* Is it a sin, Mom, to pray for ignorance?

ALICE. That's a very fascinating idea. But there's one thing you need to remember about those two objects. They were both made by the same God. He must have done that for some reason. Could not that reason have been that he wants both types of people in the Church? For whatever reason, I don't know. But maybe . . . maybe the Iron Rodder is there to keep the Liahona geared toward the basics. And the Liahona is there to push, pull, and make noise so that the Iron Rodder will occasionally look up to get the whole picture. Maybe it's God's system of checks and balances—I don't know. What I do know is that you and he will have to figure out some way to get together and resolve this. Whether you give in to him, or he does, or you reach some kind of compromise, I don't care. It's just got to happen. *(Pause.)* Or I won't make you any more sandwiches. *(They hug each other. Sound of a car driving up. ALICE pulls away. ROBERT enters at the side of the house, struggling with a plant. PAUL moves to help him.)* What . . . ? Another azalea bush?

ROBERT. A healthy one. *(ROBERT and PAUL struggle with the plant, finally putting it on the ground near the old one.)* Thank you, Paul. Leonard told me what was wrong with the other plant. It was getting too much water. The azalea doesn't need a lot of water. In fact, it does better in dry ground. I knew that—

PAUL. So what's going to happen to the old one?

ROBERT. Leonard told me I should uproot it and plant this one in its place. Would you like to help me, Paul?

PAUL. Sure.

(PAUL grabs a nearby shovel and starts digging up the old plant.)

ROBERT. Oh, wait! Keep digging, Paul. There's something I've got to get in the house.

(ROBERT leaves. PAUL and ALICE look knowingly at each other. ROBERT comes back out, hands the Book of Mormon to ALICE, who takes it, looks surprised. ROBERT turns to PAUL.) Excellent job. Let's get this other one ready to plant. (He starts removing the cardboard pot holding the healthy bush.) Alice, would you read that passage I have marked?

(ROBERT and PAUL work the bush out of its container and into the hole PAUL dug while ALICE reads aloud.)

ALICE. "And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard went forth, and he saw that his . . ."

ROBERT. Azalea bush.

ALICE. "And he saw that his azalea bush began to decay; and he said: I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it, that perhaps it may shoot forth young and tender branches and it perish not. . . . But behold, the main top thereof began to perish. . . . The master of the vineyard saw it, and he said unto his servant: It grieveth me that I should lose this tree."

(ALICE starts to choke up. PAUL and ROBERT finally have the bush ready to put in the hole. ROBERT stands, takes over reading as PAUL plants the bush.)

ROBERT. "But what could I have done more in my vineyard? . . . I have nourished it, and I have digged about it, and I have pruned it. . . . Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard? And . . . the servant said unto his master: Is it not the loftiness," (pauses to add) or the pride, "of thy vineyard?" (PAUL stops digging and listens as ROBERT continues reading. ROBERT is starting to choke up too as he reads.) "Have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good? . . . Behold, they grew faster than the strength of the roots. . . . And the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Let us go to and hew down the trees of the vineyard. . . . What could I have done more for my vineyard?" (PAUL looks at ROBERT, who moves closer to ALICE, puts his arm around her.) "But, behold, the servant said unto the Lord of the vineyard: Spare it a little longer. And the Lord said: Yea, I will spare it a little longer . . . ." (Pause. ROBERT is really having trouble at this point, but he continues.) "For it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard." (ROBERT closes the book, gives

it to ALICE, then kneels down with PAUL. Together the two men tamp down the soil as ALICE looks on, smiling.)

(Slow fade to blackout)

*Matters of the Heart* premiered at Theater-in-the-Square, Provo, Utah, on November 22, 1985, with the following cast: Alice Baines: Betty Jo Smith; Robert Baines: Robert Detweiler; Paul Baines: Tim Scherer. Directed by Thomas F. Rogers. It received a second production at Theatre-in-the-Square II in 1986 with Richard Dutcher as Paul Baines and directed by Thom Duncan. *Matters of the Heart* won the Utah Valley Theatre Guild's award for Best New Play of 1985.

# THOM DUNCAN

King George in Tim Slover's *Joyful Noise* in the Nauvoo Theatrical Society's production at the Center Street Theater in Orem, Utah—2002

unknown photographer



# Tell the Heather

MORAG PLAICE SHEPHERD

## CHARACTERS

SHAUNA (WOMAN), a woman in her late twenties

SHAUNA (CHILD), Shauna aged twelve to fourteen

FRASER, Shauna's brother, who is older than her by about five years

HAMISH, a school friend of Shauna's

MARJORIE, Shauna's childhood friend

FATHER, Shauna's father

GRANNY, Shauna's grandmother

(Note to the actors: Scottish accents, please. Thank you.)

*The lights come up on SHAUNA AS A WOMAN. SHAUNA AS A CHILD enters and sits across from an older woman, GRANNY, who has a shot of whiskey in one hand and a cigarette in the other. As SHAUNA AS A CHILD sits, SHAUNA AS A WOMAN walks over behind the scene to watch what is going on.*

SHAUNA (CHILD). Granny, we were driving home from school today, and we saw Julie riding down the middle of the street on her bike. She was all over the place and it looked like she was gonna get hit by a car a coupla times, and she just had this great stupid smile on her face, like this (*imitates her face*). When we got home her Ma was standing outside her house screamin' at her: (*gets off of her chair to reenact the story—yells*) "Julie, get outa the middle of the street, Julie! You're never gonna be allowed sweeties ever again, Julie. Get to the house, Julie, or I'll beat your arse red hot." She's so nuts.

GRANNY. (*Giggles a bit.*) Now, dinna be mean, Shauna. She is your cousin.

(*Puffs on her cigarette.*)

SHAUNA (CHILD). I know, Granny, but she's so annoying. She has those eyeglasses that magnify her eyes the size of oranges, and then she holds her mouth in this gawky smile, like she canna do anything else with it. The other day at school

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Shepherd: Tell the Heather

she came up behind me in the dinner line wi' me friends and she goes, "Hey, Shauna, you're me cousin, Shauna, did you know that you're me cousin or no? Hey, Shauna, you wanna come to me house, Shauna? I've got sweeties at me house, Shauna. You're me cousin, Shauna."

GRANNY. Aye, but you have to understand that wee Julie is a bit overenergetic. If she eats too many sweeties, she just flips out. I feel sad for her poor mother. (*Knocks back a shot of whiskey.*)

SHAUNA (CHILD). I know. But it's so embarrassing when she comes up to me like that at school.

GRANNY. Och, well then, wee lassie, you best be on your way now before your father gets home.

(*She takes a puff on her cigarette.*)

SHAUNA (CHILD). Ooowe, but I dinna want to go home. I wanna stay with you for a bit. I wanna wee cakie with a colored button on the top.

GRANNY. Och, Shauna, you're gonna get me in trouble wi' your father.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Please, Granny.

GRANNY. Och, all rightie. But you have to clean out the fire and be outa here in three-quarters of an hour, you hear?

SHAUNA (CHILD). An canna have a cakie?

GRANNY. All rightie. Here I'll get you one from the kitchen, and you get to work.

(*GRANNY stubs out her cigarette in an ashtray and goes offstage and comes back on with a cake and hands it to SHAUNA AS A CHILD, who moves stage right near the front. She puts out newspaper on the floor and grabs a fire-poker, then acts as though she is cleaning out the fire. While she is doing that, SHAUNA AS A WOMAN sits down in the chair that SHAUNA AS A CHILD was sitting in, taking her place. To indicate GRANNY's aging, she wears a scarf over her head.*)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Do you miss Grandad Morris?

GRANNY. Aye, I do, Shauna. I do indeed.

(*She almost starts to cry.*)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Does that picture make you happy or sad, Granny?

GRANNY. (*Takes a puff of her cigarette.*) Och, well now. Sometimes it makes me happy, 'cause I remember the times that we had together. And sometimes it makes me sad cause I realize it's just a picture, and he's gone for good. Dinna know when I'll see the old bugger again. At least I know for one thing though, that he died happy in his fields, doin' what he loved and spent all of his life doin'. His heart just could'ne take any more of life and gave up right then and there wi' no warnin' or anything. (*Almost starts to cry.*)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Now, Granny I'm so sorry. I did'ne mean to make you cry,

I promise. (SHAUNA starts to cry.) Och, Granny, I'm so sad now. Can I have a wee cakie, wi' a colored button?

(GRANNY starts to laugh, and so does SHAUNA.)

GRANNY. Glad to see that you hav'ne changed a bit. Here I'll go get you one.

(GRANNY exits and returns with a cake, which she gives to SHAUNA. GRANNY removes her scarf as SHAUNA AS A CHILD exits. SHAUNA eats as she addresses the audience.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). These experiences that you will see are moments from me life. I dinna mind whether they are accurate or no, but it's the way that I remember them that makes me who I am as a person today and causes me to think about who I was then and who I think I am now. (FRASER enters, stands near SHAUNA, waiting to tell her something.) Me Grandma never really did anything great in her life. She never had a job, not once, but what she did was wake up every morning wi' Grandad Morris and make him breakfast. She played music on her wee radio in the kitchen while she made big pans of soup.

FRASER. (In a somber tone.) You would'ne believe what happened over at the house today. I was sittin' in the livin' room watchin' tele, when in walks Granny. She bursts in through the door in a big fluster. Apparently Uncle Johnny is really sick, so she went over to see him, and he's no doin' well at all. So she came in the door, all upset like, an cryin'. I've never seen Granny cry before. But she goes, "We're all dyin', all of us are dyin' now. There's no many of us left." Then she left the house.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Och, Fraser, that's terrible. Poor Granny. Do you think that she'll be all right?

FRASER. Aye, you know Granny. Tough as old boots, that one. It really hit me though, 'cause I've never seen Gran cry like that.

(FRASER exits, and SHAUNA turns to the audience again.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). It did'ne affect me, hearin' that Granny cried, 'cause I had seen her cry before. What stayed in me mind about that was that Gran was havin' these people that were close to her dyin', and she did'ne know the answers. I always just assumed that by the time I got to Granny's age I would know all of the answers about the God and religious thing, so that it would'ne be a problem. But her fears were still there. Me brother telling me that got me remembering back to the first time that I thought about men in the sky, sitting on chairs, looking down into the world through magical lakes. (While she is saying this, SHAUNA AS A CHILD runs across the back of the stage all the way and then off the other side.) One of those times happened

when I was running away from the kiddies on the street.

(The girl runs back on the stage and drops to the ground. She is puffing and looks greatly concerned. She is catching her breath and in the midst of it says this:)

SHAUNA (CHILD). Oh dearie me. Great person up in the skies . . . (She clasps her hands together and looks up.) Please, if you help me to escape from Hamish McGregor and Nigel and Ewin Campbell, I promise I will never use a swear word again until the day that I die.

(SHAUNA AS A CHILD moves out of her light toward the back of the stage and poses as though in a hiding position. From offstage we hear the voices of some boys.)

VOICES (OFFSTAGE). You canna hide from us, Shauna Burns. We'll get you, you little heathen. Better watch your back.

(With that the voices fade and SHAUNA moves back into her light. She looks up to the skies again.)

SHAUNA (CHILD). Thank you, mighty one up in the skies. I will be your friend forever for letting me escape those smelly wee lads. I don't suppose you would mind breaking Hamish McGregor's left or right leg? You see, he is mighty fast and I would'ne be as afraid of them if he had a broken leg. (She carries on looking up as though waiting for a reply.) All rightie, I s'pose two favors in one day is a bit much. Thanks though. I'll be seeing you later.

(Quite contented, she skips off on her merry way, whistling as though nothing had happened. The lights come back up on SHAUNA AS A WOMAN.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). And that was me first memory of God, 'cause He really did save me that day, to say the least. (She giggles a bit.) And I'm glad to say that Hamish McGregor did'ne break any of his legs 'cause a decade later he turned into a fine runner and took silver at the Scottish Athletic competitions.

Marjory Angus and I became friends during our homeroom class. She was the one that I spent most of me time with when I was kid.

(The lights come up on the two little girls. SHAUNA remains onstage, observing.)

SHAUNA (CHILD). (On the verge of tears.) Och, Marjorie, I dinna understand what Mrs. Broody is talking about. I hate Shakespeare. Everyone dies in his plays and it makes me sad for about two or three hours.

MARJORIE. Dinna talk drivel, Shauna. You dinna like anything so it dinna matter.

Och, Shauna, I have something to ask you. Well wi' all these people dying and such, what do you think's gonna happen to us when we die?

SHAUNA (CHILD). Why, are you gonna die?

MARJORIE. No, you silly wee elephant. I was just wondering if you had ever imagined what was gonna happen after you died?



SHAUNA (CHILD). Well, no. Have you?

MARJORIE. Aye, I have. And I imagined that we are lying there all by ourselves in a dark box, and that all we see is black. It's so boring, just lying there wi' no one to talk to and tossin' and turnin'. And then that's it, forever and ever.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Well that's certainly not the way it is. Me Uncle Johnny told me that he's gonna get to drink as much as he wants when he dies, so there.

MARJORIE. Och, Shauna, your uncle Johnny's drunk all the time and he does'ne know what he's talking about.

SHAUNA (CHILD). No, I think he does sometimes. Anyway, I'm sure that that's no' how death is; I'll find out for you and let you know. All rightie? Och, sausages, Mrs. Broody is staring right at me. She's gonna kill me and then we'll know.

MARJORIE. Shauna, be quiet. She's coming this way.

*(Lights go down on the girls and come up on SHAUNA again.)*

SHAUNA. Not only was Marjorie responsible for probing me mind about me life, our experiences together caused me to wonder about the world and me place in it.

*(As she is saying this, SHAUNA AS A CHILD and MARJORIE enter and sit side-by-side at the front of the stage, looking out to the audience as though it is the lake.)*

SHAUNA (CHILD). When do you think it's gonna come out?

MARJORIE. Me Pa said tha' she usually comes out by the end of sunset.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Well, how many minutes do you think that will be?

MARJORIE. Just wait, Shauna.

*(They wait for a bit.)*

SHAUNA (CHILD). Well, it has'ne happened and it's nearly over.

*(They wait a bit longer.)*

MARJORIE. Well, I thought we would see it. That was disappointing.

SHAUNA (CHILD). But it's still beautiful out here though, is it no'?

MARJORIE. Aye, it is. Now that the sun's gone down, it looks sorta scary, don't you think?

SHAUNA (CHILD). *(Pointing.)* Och, my, did you see that over there?

MARJORIE. Aye, I think it was a fish.

SHAUNA (CHILD). You know what, Marjie. I think the loch looks almost alive right now.

MARJORIE. It does at that. It's like it's breathing with the cold air on top of it like that.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Maybe that's what the monster is. Maybe an old man or a

wee kiddie looked out onto the loch one night at just the right time, and they thought they saw a monster, and that's how the legend of the Loch Ness monster began.

MARJORIE. I bet you're right, Shauna. See, there's nothing to be worried about anymore. The loch is the monster.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Aye, that's it Marjorie. But you know, we better no' tell anyone about it, 'cause we would'ne wanna ruin it for anyone. Let's keep it a secret, all right?

MARJORIE. Aye, definitely. Come on, let's go. I'm getting chilly out here.

*(They exit. SHAUNA AS A WOMAN walks over to where they were standing.)*

SHAUNA (WOMAN). I don't think that Marjorie will ever realize just how much she helped me. Her questions were what kept me questioning for years to come. And they continued to probe, almost to the point that they tortured me mind. From the time that Marjorie and I discovered the secret of the Loch Ness monster, I turned to looking at the land to feel the wind and to see the colors, to see the questions. *(While she is saying this, her brother enters and stands next to her. They stand at the edge of the stage as though looking out at the landscape.)* It's always on this land that me mind opens up and I can understand and contemplate her secrets. It's this earth that lets me know that there's life above. *(To her brother.)* No, Fraser, it's no' just tha'. There's a story here. Scotland is alive. Can you no' feel tha' she's alive? Don't you think that maybe people have walked and breathed here? Sometimes when I look at the heather on the hills it looks as though the wind is pushing against it, trying to catch a story.

FRASER. You're funny, sis. An' how do you know that the land's a girl anyway?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Do you no' know nothing? Everyone knows that the land is a girl.

*(He starts laughing at her; then she laughs, too.)*

FRASER. That's absolute haggis and you know it.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Sometimes I used to watch the wind across the moors there, you see, and I thought up stories in me mind. Like how the wind is jealous of the beautiful purple heather 'cause it has a body and because it is beautiful. All the animals come and tell the heather their stories of pain, and the jealous wind wants to know them, so he bashes against her, trying to catch them, but she won't give them up. That's why heather is one of the strongest flowers.

FRASER. Well, if that's no' the biggest plate of haggis I have ever heard, then I don't know what.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Well, don't you ever think about things?

FRASER. Like what?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Like there's something out there. Something big. You know, maybe in the air, in the rivers, stuff like that?

FRASER. No, I dinna. I think there's too much killing in the world for something or someone to be in charge. It would'ne make sense. And if there is a God and he's anything like they say he is in those big old churches where everyone puts money in a dish and kneels on those cushions, then I don't want to know.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Och, Fraser, when have you ever been to the church?

FRASER. I'm telling you, we had to go sometimes when I was younger and in school. Did they no' make you go when you went?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Aye, I guess we did sometimes.

FRASER. Plus I went wi' Ewin that one time when he was getting his thingamabob. I dunno. But the point is, it smelt old in there, and it was eerie and scary, wi' all those stupid candles and stuff. Plus the main man looked like the Pope gone wrong. It did'ne feel right for me, that's for certain.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Can I ask you something, Fraser?

FRASER. Aye.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Why did you come back?

FRASER. I dunno, maybe it's 'cause I wanted to see me old man.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). But you hav'no' even seen him yet.

FRASER. I know, I said I was thinking about it.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). So are you gonna go and see him?

FRASER. No.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). What are you talkin' about, Fras? You're full of it.

FRASER. You know, I did'ne ask your opinion in the first place.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Well, it's no' like you come round here all that much anymore.

(Pause.) Do you want to make amends?

FRASER. Amends? I did nothing wrong.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Stubborn to the very end you are, just like him. You'd feel a lot better if you just went round and apologized.

FRASER. But I did nothin' wrong.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). You left home when you were sixteen and you never talked to him again.

FRASER. I know, I just couldn't bring myself . . .

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Just go make up. How hard is that?

FRASER. I dunna wan' to talk about it no more.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). All right, all right.

(The lights dim and FRASER exits. SHAUNA addresses the audience.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Fraser was a wee bit of a rebel growing up. He did'ne like religion, school, or anything that was deemed proper whatsoever. When he was told to do something it was like there was a switch pressed inside o'him that told him to automatically do the opposite. At first I think that he did it on purpose, then I think that he did it as a part of his nature. Doing the wrong became part of who Fraser is.

(SHAUNA exits. Lights up on SHAUNA AS A CHILD sitting on a chair. FRASER enters wearing a cap to indicate that he is younger now. SHAUNA AS A CHILD follows him.)

SHAUNA (CHILD). (Yelling at him.) Fraser, where you going, Fraser? Can I come wi' you? I want to go wi' you.

FRASER. Go home, Shauna.

SHAUNA (CHILD). But I wanna go wi' you.

FRASER. I'm going somewhere that you canna come. (FRASER stops, then goes to SHAUNA AS A CHILD.) Honestly, Shauna, you're not gonna wanna come wi' me. Please go back home 'fore you get us both into trouble.

SHAUNA (CHILD). But are you gonna come back or no'? 'Cause if you're no', then I'd rather come wi' you.

FRASER. (Getting annoyed.) Och, Shauna, dinna do this to me. I have to go somewhere and you just canna come. So please, just go home.

SHAUNA (CHILD). (Whimpering.) So, where are you going? Why are you always leavin' me?

FRASER. I'm just gonna go over an meet wi' me mates over in Thurso. And you canna come 'cause I'll get into trouble wi' Pa and you'll get into trouble too.

SHAUNA (CHILD). No, you won't get into trouble 'cause I'll take the blame. Pa will be all right 'cause I'll be wi' you.

FRASER. Lookie, I said you could'ne come, all right. So stop fussin' an' go.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Oh, yeah well, every time you take off an' don't tell Pa, he gets in a bad mood and then I'm the one who has to live wi' it. What do you think about that?

FRASER. It's no' me problem.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Well, I think you're a selfish person.

FRASER. Don't you dare make me feel bad or I'll kick your arse. You're always doin' tha'.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Fine then. I'm goin'. An' you're horrible.

FRASER. I'll make it up to you. Okay? You can come wi' me an' me pals to the games all right?

SHAUNA (CHILD). You better come back tonight though.

FRASER. (*Exiting.*) See you later, sis.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Bye.

(*She watches him go, then kneels and starts to cry a bit. SHAUNA enters and kneels with SHAUNA AS A CHILD. They put their hands together and pray.*)

SHAUNA (CHILD) AND SHAUNA (WOMAN). Please, Mister, up in the sky. Please watch over me brother, that he will be safe and no' get into trouble. Thanks. (SHAUNA AS A CHILD *exits*. SHAUNA AS A WOMAN *sits at the little table and begins to read and take some tea*. HAMISH MCGREGOR *enters*.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). I dunna even know how many times that I said prayers for that boy. I don't know if it ever did any good, but I think that it made me better.

HAMISH. Och, well, and if it's no' Shauna Burns.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Excuse me? Do I know you?

HAMISH. You don't remember me? It's Hamish McGregor from primary school.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Well my, oh my. Do you have a memory or what? It's been over ten years.

HAMISH. Getting old now, huh?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Aye. Well, you best no' be chasin' me down any streets 'cause I'm no' up to that right now.

HAMISH. (*Laughs.*) Dunna worry, I'll no' do that. So what are you up to nowadays anyhow?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Och, I work over at Neil's farm as a veterinarian. And you, what have you been up to?

HAMISH. Actually, after school I started working with me pa on the farm, plus I did me running too. Then I went on a mission for me church. And now I work for me church. I go about and teach all the kiddies about the Bible and the scriptures, and I'm a fill-in teacher for PE and Kirk Hallam.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Seriously? That's the most brilliant job I've ever heard of. Well, who would've thought you'd turn into a religious man?

HAMISH. Shauna, if you keep talking like that, I'll have to chase you down the street an' you would've want that now, would you?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Okay, Mr. Religious Man. Seein' as you are so knowin' an' all, I have a question for you.

HAMISH. Dearie me. These things always make me nervous.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Where are we gonna go when we die?

HAMISH. But first, I have a question for you. Where were we before we were born?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). I dunna know.

HAMISH. Well it is something to think about . . . anyways, I best be off 'cause I've got to pick me boy up from the babysitter's. Shauna, if you ever want to come to church, here is the address. (*Hands her a card.*) You may find some more questions. (*He smiles.*) And a good day to you.

(HAMISH *exits*.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). As if it wasne frustrating not to find an answer to one question, now I have another to bother me. (*She rises and heads downstage.*) After that day that Fraser took off in the fields, I didne see him for a few years. You see, me father was a hard person to live wi' for someone like me brother, so he just left. (SHAUNA AS A CHILD *enters near SHAUNA.*) There was a place in the back of me house that I loved to go to when I was a little girl. (MARJORIE *enters upstage.*) It was the ruins of a castle tha' was a wee bit up on a hill. I always tried to get me friend Marjorie to go wi' me, but she went one time and didne like it at all.

(*Lights on MARJORIE.*)

MARJORIE. Shauna, I'm leaving. I don't like it here. It's really creepy and I feel like someone's watching me. I'm getting cold, are you coming? All rightie, then I'll see you later.

(*She exits. Lights back to SHAUNA AS A WOMAN. She goes centerstage as if she is looking at the castle ruins and then sits on the floor. While she speaks, SHAUNA AS A CHILD mimics the action then sits a few feet from SHAUNA. Their lines are to the audience.*)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). I came here whenever I felt alone, which was a lot. But it never made me feel not alone.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Every time I come here there is this lamb that I named Fluffy, but it isne fluffy. She stares at me with these big eyes, and I always wonder where her Mum is. But she never seems afraid like me.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). I used to sit here and think about things. It was here that I decided I wanted to be a veterinarian, 'cause I wanted to take care of animals, fix them. I thought that if I could fix life then that would make me life worthwhile.

SHAUNA (CHILD). I sit here, and to be honest, it feels like there are eyes watching me too, just like Marjorie said. Sometimes I get so scared that I'm afraid to move and I can't until I talk meself into it.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). When I was in the first year of secondary school I had to write a poem for me English class about a place that we had been to. (SHAUNA AS A CHILD *rises, goes to the chairs, and sits. MARJORIE enters and*

*sits in the other chair.*) One day while I was sitting here I knew that I had to write about this place.

(SHAUNA AS A CHILD *stands with a piece of paper in her hands. She reads to the audience.*)

SHAUNA (CHILD). (*With a loud voice.*)

The castle in the back of me house

Calls to me

His skin is gray

The animals know to stay away

The castle sits alone

He frightens me

He whispers to me and

The silence is filled with sound

I sometimes talk to him

It frightens me

I stay with him sometimes

I wait till I have to run back to my house.

(*She returns to her place on the floor center as SHAUNA AS A WOMAN rises and sits in a chair right. MARJORIE approaches SHAUNA AS A CHILD.*)

SHAUNA (CHILD). Good gravy, Marjorie, what in heaven's name are you doing all the way out here? I thought that you said that you would'ne come back here again because you did'ne like it.

MARJORIE. Och, dunna be stupid, Shauna, I'm not scared. Anyways, I thought that I would find ya here and here you are.

(MARJORIE *gets down on the ground next to SHAUNA AS A CHILD and puts her head in her lap.*)

SHAUNA (CHILD). Are you all right?

MARJORIE. Aye, I just wanted to come an' tell you what a good job you did on your poem in class today.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Thanks.

MARJORIE. I'm terribly jealous of you, Shauna, 'cause you're so good and I canna write like tha'.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Och, Marjie, I canna do anything! You're better at everything in school than me, you have to tell me how to do everything.

MARJORIE. Aye, that is true.

SHAUNA (CHILD). (*Laughing.*) You came all the way here to tell me that you're jealous o' me?

MARJORIE. Aye.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Well, I guess you can be on your way then 'fore you get scared.

MARJORIE. (*Looking about as though she is very scared.*) I'm no' scared, I told you.

SHAUNA (CHILD). (*Holding MARJORIE's hand.*) Marjie, you're the best friend I ever had, ever. An' I promise you tha' no one will be as good a friend as you for the rest o' me life.

MARJORIE. Oh. Rightie then. Okay, well, ah. Thanks. I best be off before me Pa comes looking for me. I'll see you tomorrow at school.

SHAUNA (CHILD). (*Hugging MARJORIE.*) Well, I best be off too. I'll come wi' ya, just let me grab me school bag.

(*They exit as SHAUNA AS A WOMAN comes center and sits on the floor again, looking about.*)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). (*As she speaks, FRASER enters holding a sketch pad and drawing equipment.*) I used to come to this place for many reasons, but today I have come here because I just want to sit and remember all that I have learned up to this point in me life. (*Sees FRASER.*) Och, well hell's teeth, Fraser, fancy seeing you here. What in heaven's name are you doin' here?

FRASER. Well, what are you doin' here?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Well, I live here now, you know. 'Sides, I used to come here all the time and you never did. Why now? Och, well, how are you doin' anyways? What are you up to?

FRASER. Well, I guess the old man rubbed off on me after all.

(*He indicates the drawing things he has in his hands.*)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Well, what are you gonna draw?

(*The FATHER enters and starts to set up his art stuff.*)

FRASER. (*With a smirk.*) Well, this place brings back fantastic memories, don't it?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Oh, really. When did you ever come here anyway?

FRASER. Probably when you were already asleep.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). You know. I dunna think that I wanna know.

FRASER. How's the work on Neilie's Farm these days anyhow?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Och, you know. Same as it always is. The other day though, the funniest thing happened. I had to go up one the cows, you know? (*Acting it out.*) So I had to put these gloves on all the way up to me shoulders. Then up I go, wi' the cow standing there looking at me out the side of her eyes. And I'm standin' there talking to her, you know, "Sorry, Miss Cow, that I have to go up your butt like this." So I was feelin' about up there tryin' to assess the problems, and when I untwisted the bladder, I go to pull out me arm. It was stuck. Yep, good and stuck. I stood there for about an hour and

a half yellin' at the top of me lungs for help. But just me luck, everyone was out for lunch. Eventually I resorted to having a conversation with the cow 'cause I could'ne do nothing else.

FRASER. (*Laughing.*) How in heaven's name did you get out?

SHAUNA (WOMAN). When they eventually found me, they had to pull me arm from out o' the glove. The glove's still in there.

FRASER. Well, it seems like your life is ten times more exciting than mine right now.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Well, I highly doubt that! You know, I was always intrigued when Pa used to paint all the time. I used to watch him for hours play wi' the colors on his paper. It's almost magical.

FRASER. Aye, well then, little sis, then this one's for you.

(FRASER packs up his art stuff and exits. SHAUNA AS A WOMAN moves down front.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Me father also influenced me in many ways. (SHAUNA AS A CHILD enters, as if she is struggling, climbing up a wall. On the other side of the wall, out of the sight of SHAUNA AS A CHILD, well-dressed and with a cane, is her FATHER, waiting.) Me father served in the Second World War when he was more of a lad. I dunna really know how hard that was for him, he did'ne speak of it. But I imagine that it made him the hard man that he was. My mother left him after I was born, so he was left to raise me the best that he could.

(SHAUNA AS A CHILD finally makes it to the other side of the wall. Disheveled from climbing the wall, she sorts herself out.)

FATHER. Now you will tell me right now, Shauna Burns, where have you been? And after you have relayed a satisfactory answer you can go out to the stables and muck them all out as a punishment for lying to me.

SHAUNA (CHILD). I went out wi' me pals, Father.

FATHER. An' where exactly did you go wi' your pals looking like tha' wi' a dress on? I s'pose ya went to the dance, dinna ya? Did you go to the dance when I told you no' to, Shauna Burns?

SHAUNA (CHILD). Aye, sir.

FATHER. Well, I've nothing more to say to you. Go. Go and do as I've told you. (FATHER and SHAUNA AS A CHILD exit.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). My father wasn't very, shall we say, fatherly. He completely terrified me at times, but I certainly respected the man. (FATHER enters and begins painting. Then SHAUNA AS A CHILD enters and stands behind him, watching.) I owe him a great deal as far as all that I've accomplished. You

see while I was playing about as a child, me Father was always busy at work. Then he spent his time off perfecting his arts.

SHAUNA (CHILD). What are you paintin' a picture of, Pa?

FATHER. As you can quite easily be seeing, it's of those flowers rights there.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Sorry.

FATHER. Well you needn't be sorry. Just use your head and you'll find that you already know.

(SHAUNA AS A WOMAN joins the scene, watching her father work.)

SHAUNA (CHILD). But, Pa, I was wondering . . . why are you painting flowers when you can just pick some from the fields?

FATHER. When you paint things in nature, Shauna, they will no' die. You can capture life in a painting, you can appreciate it every day, and then you can hand that same beauty on to others who may appreciate in a different way.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Then why no' just take a photo of the flower if you love it that much?

FATHER. I did'ne say that I loved the flower, Shauna. It's no' just a flower. This painting shows how I would like to feel about living. Tell me what you see, Shauna.

SHAUNA (CHILD). Och, well now. Father, I hate to tell you, but I dunna think that it really looks like that flower there. But I do like it. Will you paint me a picture one day?

FATHER. You're right. This does'ne look like that flower at all. What do you think, Shauna? Shall I throw it into the fire and start again? Or shall I keep it? Whatever you say, Shauna, that's what I'm gonna do.

SHAUNA (CHILD). (*After some thought.*) I think you should keep it, Pa. Do you think that's right?

FATHER. Why do you think so, Shauna?

SHAUNA (CHILD). Because you drew it, Pa. The way it looks is you, and that makes it beautiful to me.

FATHER. Well then, me child, I shall just have to keep working on it.

(FATHER exits. SHAUNA AS A CHILD picks up his painting and takes it to SHAUNA AS A WOMAN, who takes it and stares at it for a while.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Me father painted many pictures in his spare time, but of them all, this is the one that I look at the most. I can still see his hand in this picture and though it's no' a Monet, a van Gogh, or a Renoir, it's an imperfect impression of the way me Pa wanted to see the world. Although me Pa was as tough as nails, I found a sympathy for him, deep in the flawed strokes in this picture.

(SHAUNA AS A CHILD sits on the floor, picks up a book—Lord of the Flies—and begins reading. FATHER enters and joins her, reading his own book.)

SHAUNA (CHILD). Pa, what does "scar" mean?

FATHER. Lassie, just keep reading. I promise tha' if you keep reading tha' you'll find the answer. Just keep reading and asking tha' question in your mind and you'll find the answer, okey-dokey?

(SHAUNA AS A CHILD exits. SHAUNA AS A WOMAN takes her place, picks up the same book, and starts to read.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Pa, what's gonna happen when we die?

FATHER. Just keep living and you'll find the answers, wee lassie.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). But do you know where we're gonna go?

FATHER. I'm no' sure, Shauna. I think I have a pretty good idea for meself. But I think that if you look, you'll find bits and bobs here and there.

SHAUNA (WOMAN). Are you afraid to die, Pa?

FATHER. Och, Shauna. A wee bit, aye! (He laughs a bit.) Aye, a bit scared, but no' too much, so dunna worry yourself, okay?

(Her FATHER gets his stuff and exits. SHAUNA moves down center.)

SHAUNA (WOMAN). I don't know what's going to happen in my life, but I do think that if I keep looking, that I'll find some of the answers that will help me understand who's up there (points up) in the sky. I often wonder who'll be there on the other side of death? Maybe I'll find some answers to the mysteriousness that I find in the castle and in the water around here. I can only hope!

(She exits and the play is done.)

## Saturday's Warrior, Recalled on a Sunday Morning

ERIC SAMUELSEN

I WAS IN COLLEGE when I first saw *Saturday's Warrior* in production. I was a freshman at BYU, and my student home evening group decided to go see it at Spanish Fork High School, where it was playing in an extended run. One member of our little group had a car, and we all crowded in, which was kind of cool because it meant I got to sit in back, in close quarters with girls to either side of me. That drive, snuggling with two girls I barely knew, remains the only positive memory I have of that evening.

What do I remember about the show? The set consisted of a series of platforms, with a few set pieces suggesting more specific locations. I remember two goofy missionaries, a wayward young man, an investigator, a little girl in the premortal existence, and a crippled girl in a wheelchair. I don't remember what any of them looked like or wore. But I remember vividly how I felt. It was my first experience with a most unpleasant and frightening emotion: a feeling of deep, overpowering alienation from my own culture.

When the show was over, the audience leapt to its feet and gave the show a screaming, shouting standing ovation. I refused to stand. I sat grimly in my seat, refusing to applaud, refusing to acknowledge the performance in any way. My father is an opera singer, and I'd seen lots of opera and musical theatre. I was a theatre major. I had been raised to always applaud at the end of any performance, even if I thought it wasn't very good. Not this show, though—I wasn't about to show any support for any part of it.

And my home evening group noticed. Oh my, did they notice. Sharp words were exchanged on our way out to the car, and on the ride home I made a pompous jackass of myself, loudly expounding on the various deficiencies of the script, the music, the performances. Everyone else in the car had liked it, of course; they'd liked it a lot. I knew that and was determined to ruin their enjoyment of it. The last five minutes of the ride home, I finally became dimly aware that my voice was the only one still speaking, that I was haranguing a silent carload of people whose evening I had managed to spoil. I was proud of that. At least I'd managed to wreck it for everyone.



I was never again invited to any other activities by that home evening group. I wasn't even welcome to our weekly FHE meeting. And that was fine by me. I didn't care if I ever saw any of those people again.

All right, I was a college freshman, full of myself and a pain in the rear. I was also in the process of flunking out. By the end of my second semester at BYU, I had stopped going to classes completely, had lost my job, was broke, in debt, and productively spending my days feeling sorry for myself. The only way out of my tailspin that I could think of was to go on a mission, which I did, to Norway, that summer. And while studying Norwegian at the LTM in Rexburg, Idaho, one P-day all the missionaries studying there were given a special treat: a visit to the Ricks College theater to see their production of *Saturday's Warrior*. Oh, joy.

I went—it wasn't like I had a choice—though I was determined to be grumpy about it. But it wasn't so bad the second time. Not that the script or the music had improved, and the production was a good deal worse. But at that second production of *Warrior*, I met someone else who didn't like it, and thereby made a friend. He was another LTM missionary, heading to Sweden on his mission. We'd met earlier, but what really cemented a friendship that has continued to this day was the fact that we were the only people in the audience who hated the show. And we had a most agreeable time afterward talking about why.

Since that time, my feelings about *Saturday's Warrior* have evolved somewhat. Today I consider Doug Stewart a cherished friend. I think, though, it would be valuable to analyze *Warrior* as a dramatic text and to examine its place in Mormon culture. I want to discover some things, including why I disliked it so. The fact is, it was immensely popular back in the '70s, with long runs in Utah and a much greater success as a touring show. It remains somewhat popular today. It was, and is, a cultural phenomenon. And one reason has to be the fact that it is a musical by and about Mormons. Folks were able to watch the show and feel that their lives were being performed, that "we" were watching something about "us." But the show also reflected attitudes and ideas and cultural norms that some Mormons, me included, didn't care for and wished didn't exist. At the LTM, I discovered something I hadn't previously known: that there were other Mormons who felt uncomfortable about the same aspects of Mormon culture that I disliked. And so *Warrior* became a kind of touchstone. It took some years before I could contemplate friendship with anyone who liked *Warrior*, but I also met and became friends with plenty of other people who didn't like it, many of them also BYU theatre majors. In fact, that became an in-group requirement: if you liked *Warrior*, you couldn't be taken seriously as an artist

or thinker. You weren't one of the cool kids. I learned that the profound alienation I felt while watching *Warrior*, the feeling that "this is Mormon art, and I'm a Mormon and I hate it, so what does that mean?" was also felt by others, which led inevitably to forming a new social group, united by our shared sense of alienation. Our motto: "Affirm the Faith, Attack the Culture."

Of course, *Warrior* was very popular on the BYU campus back then, which may have meant that we really *couldn't* like it: one way artsy young intellectuals assert their individuality is by not liking things most other people like. I don't remember who wrote this, but I remember reading it one time, "The problem with being a snob is that you can't ever like anything because there's always the fear that someone snobbier than you will look at you snobbishly and say, 'Oh, so that's the kind of thing you like.'" I don't like this about myself, but I was in fact exactly that kind of art snob. But there were also reviews of the play that we read and agreed with, by Alan Keele, Clifton Jolley, and others. Yeah, we were snobs, and snobbery is always distasteful. But we had our reasons, and those reasons weren't entirely invalid.

I do think that one basis for our discontent was visceral and emotional more than intellectual—we hated Lex de Azevedo's music. It's not that we didn't like musicals: we loved *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Sweeney Todd* and *Tommy*. And generally we liked classical music and jazz, especially the fusion varieties—Coltrane, Herbie Hancock, Miles Davis. But what we loved more than anything was rock-'n'-roll, and we happened to live in an exciting time musically. Within our group, we might endlessly debate Led Zeppelin vs. The Who, and my eccentric support for Jethro Tull got me props from friends busy turning me on to The Sex Pistols and The Ramones and The Clash. I grew up on Bob Dylan and The Band and Creedence and The Allman Brothers. But *Warrior* was a soft rock musical, so much so that people tended to forget that Doug Stewart wrote the book and lyrics: it was generally thought of as "a Lex de Azevedo musical."

It seemed to come out of the same sensibility as the music of Bread and Loggins and Messina and Gordon Lightfoot and John Denver and Dan Fogelberg and (shudder) The Carpenters. It's the same kind of music my son today calls "weenie rock." It was music that's intentionally nonthreatening and commercial, music that's undisturbing, music that felt to us like it had the outward form of rock-'n'-roll, while denying the power thereof.

Generational battles over music and the relative coolness of certain musicians will likely never die. But I'm fifty now, and times have changed. One of my favorite recent albums is *Painted from Memory*, a collaboration between,

of all people, Burt Bacharach and Elvis Costello. Muzak stations routinely cover The Stones and The Who, and The Beatles are used to sell everything from cars to insurance; really, it seems like Neil Young is the only rocker who hasn't sold out. Today I can appreciate what an amazing vocal stylist Karen Carpenter really was, and I'll turn the car radio up if some fool DJ plays Gordon Lightfoot. Times have changed, and the fairly rigid distinctions between pop music genres have blurred beyond recognition. Still, there is a culture war in our country, and music remains a battlefield. And I still prefer my art tough-minded and rough-edged, dissonant—even ugly if need be—challenging and difficult and gritty. And so, for that reason, I doubt the day will ever come when I'll thrill to the opening chords of the *Warrior* theme.

But we had other, more significant issues with *Warrior*, which have more to do with the play than the sound of the music. And it's the ideological implications of *Warrior* that I next want to address.

An oft-stated objection to *Warrior* then and now has to do with *Warrior's* depiction of premortality. Mormons do believe that there exists a relationship between what we did in the pre-earth life and what happens to us in mortality. Abraham 3:22–23 is probably the best Mormon scripture on this subject: "Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born."

So particularly talented spirits are placed on Earth where they can make a difference—that seems to be the gist of it. But *Warrior* takes this notion several steps further. *Warrior* shows people in the premortal world falling in love, forming themselves into families, making covenants, agreeing to find and marry each other once they get to Earth. In fact, that's a common enough folk doctrine in Mormon culture—that family bonds and romantic attachments were foreordained. There may be no scriptural support for such ideas, but people hold them all the same.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with a play taking theological liberties in a provocative and engaging way. One fine example, I believe, is the Book of Job, which I regard as essentially an old playscript. I don't believe that God actually makes deals with the devil over how people are going to be mistreated. But that conversation between God and the devil described in Job, chapters one and two, works as a dramatic convention and sets the stage for the remarkable

theological discussion that makes up the bulk of the play. (This doesn't necessarily mean, by the way, that there wasn't really a guy named Job.)

But the specificity of *Saturday's Warrior's* treatment of the pre-earth life carries what still feel like quite troubling implications. If families sealed themselves by covenant as spirits in our premortal lives, then our choice of a mate is in a very real sense predetermined. It might mean that meeting someone, being attracted to them, dating, getting married, the whole courtship ritual is some huge, ghastly, cosmic mistake. After all, we might think we're in love with someone and compatible with them, but they still might not be The One. The thought compounds the normal anxieties of courtship exponentially. And what if something went wrong? What if the person you had previously agreed to marry died or married someone else or made terrible choices so you couldn't marry them in the temple? And doesn't this doctrine open the door to creepy guys telling girls, "I hold the priesthood and I've received a revelation that we agreed to marry in the preexistence"?

And once a couple has married, any attempt to limit the size of their families could serve to deprive some spirit of life with a family they were promised they would be part of. The decision by a couple to postpone having children, perhaps so that both partners can finish a college degree or perhaps due to financial considerations, all those sorts of normal, everyday decisions young married couples make all the time, suddenly assumes a massive theological significance. And if a newly married couple should happen to see *Warrior* and see as well the enthusiastic response of Mormon audiences to it, it's hard to imagine this not affecting their decision about when to have children.

None of this is portrayed subtly in *Warrior*, and it does carry political overtones. The central conflict of the play involves Mom and Dad Flinders and their decision to have another child—an adorable little girl we see waiting excitedly in the premortal existence—and the furiously negative reaction of Jimmy, the play's brooding protagonist. Jimmy's evil friend, Mack, sings a song called "Zero Population," which presents the argument that the world is overpopulated. In fact, we don't really ever see Mack do anything especially evil except sing that song. Jimmy isn't actually enticed by sexuality or drugs or gangs or anything a rebellious teenager might genuinely be tempted by. Jimmy's rebellion is over the political and social issue of overpopulation.

I teach at BYU, and many of my students do get married while in college, and from time to time the issue of contraception does come up. My students are genuinely astonished to hear that there was a time when birth control was an issue in Mormonism. They can't believe that LDS women were ever counseled

not to take the pill. The decision to have children seems to them fundamentally private, their business and no one else's. They find the "Zero Population" song baffling.

But when I was a student, when *Warrior* was first produced, birth control was a huge issue. And my female friends couldn't help pointing out that it was mostly men who were preaching against contraception and that it was entirely women who were going to be having all those babies.

*Saturday's Warrior* was a product of the 1970s. Produced in 1974, the tours began shortly thereafter and continued through the late '70s. The '70s was also a time of national debate over women's rights. The Equal Rights Amendment was approved by Congress in 1972. The Church issued an official First Presidency message opposing it. Sonia Johnson, an active member of the Church, began speaking out in opposition to the Church's statement. By 1977, as the ERA stalled just three states shy of ratification, Congress extended the time limit for its passage. In 1979, Sonia Johnson was excommunicated. By 1982, the ERA failed to pass.

*Saturday's Warrior* says nothing, of course, about the ERA. But *Warrior* strongly argues that any decision by a married couple to limit the size of their family is questionable. Spirits are waiting to be born, and it's the obligation of LDS women to bear those children, as many as possible. For those of us who thought of ourselves as feminists (even if some of us didn't support the ERA), *Warrior's* popularity troubled us. We didn't just disagree intellectually with the play's ideas. We thought that *Warrior* was expressing that part of LDS culture that oppressed women. We saw *Warrior* as taking a position that wasn't just conservative, but reactionary.

I can well imagine that defenders of *Warrior* might say, "Well, so what? What's wrong with a play dealing with genuinely held ideas born of the deepest personal convictions? You seem to be suggesting that those ideas are invalid simply because they're conservative." But so far I've merely been reflecting what I was thinking some thirty years ago. At the time, yes, I would probably dismiss a play as worthless because I disagreed with its politics. That's precisely what I don't want to do now.

I, today, think that *Saturday's Warrior* is a serious play, a play that deals with serious issues in a serious manner. *Saturday's Warrior* does argue for a radical reevaluation of our theology of premortal life. And that was important because the debate over feminism in the '70s wasn't just about the ERA. *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973, the same year that *Warrior* was being written.

Although abortion isn't specifically mentioned in the play, issues of life and

birth and contraception and family planning are central to the play's concerns. And *Warrior's* radical expansion of LDS doctrine on the premortal world has profound implications for the abortion debate as well. *Warrior* emerges not as anti-feminist—after all, Mrs. Flinders isn't the one objecting to having another child. The play is, however, uncompromisingly pro-life. Mrs. Flinders loses a child, and that moment has additional significance because we see the child she loses, in premortality, waiting to be born. We see the consequences of elective abortion, not through graphic imagery of aborted fetuses, but through the physical presence of the spirit personage to whom abortion would deny life.

To say that *Warrior* is pro-life suggests that the play is essentially about abortion, which isn't the case. When I say that I find *Warrior* pro-life, I mean it in a broader sense. As I reread the play text for *Warrior*, I was struck by other contemporary implications of its pro-life stance. As it happens, while writing this essay, I took a break and watched a documentary about the war in Iraq. I thought about the depictions of what the military calls "collateral damage," the film's images of children with shrapnel wounds, of hospital corridors crowded with stretchers bearing the writhing bodies of terribly injured men and women. *Warrior* reminds me that those people once waited in the premortal world for their chance at mortality, just as I did. They were excited, apprehensive perhaps, maybe a little scared, but also filled with hope and courage. It's profoundly wrong, horribly wrong, for any mortal life to be denied the fullest range of choices, the richest possible life experiences. Next to the importance and value of human life, our post-Cold War realpolitik foreign policies seem trivial and irrelevant. (And yes, I am certainly aware that, prior to the U.S. invasion, those same Iraqi civilians were desperately oppressed by Saddam Hussein's regime.)

*Warrior* is pro-life, it seems to me, in the way it invites us to acknowledge The Other in a Levinasian sense, to ponder all the implications of our common humanity with all our brothers and sisters, to contemplate the totality of life, not to limit our understanding of life to this short moment we call mortality. Yes, it does so in ways that may seem coercive to women contemplating limiting the size of their family. And I still dislike the idea of premortal family covenants. And I am surely grateful contraception is no longer a significant issue in Mormonism. But celebrating the sanctity of life, asking us to see all our mortal brothers and sisters as they once were, as children waiting to be born, forces us beyond partisan and parochial concerns. Perhaps Doug Stewart's approach borders on sentimentality, with images of a cute little girl and her crippled sister. He still wrote a deeply personal play, built on a foundation of testimony.

I admire the play immensely, although I still disagree with it. I think it's a relevant play and an important play, and yet I also take issue with some of the issues it explores. My response to the show is far more nuanced and complex today than when I first saw it, and I've come to see that as a good thing. I still have difficulties with the idea that we agreed to marry in our premortal existence. What I love about my marriage is the fact that it involves a decision made in mortality. We don't know much about premortality, but I assume that our defining characteristic as premortal spirits was naiveté. We might have been able to talk about "sin" or "pain" or "sorrow" in the abstract, but we'd never actually experienced any of those things and didn't really know what they meant. I love the idea that in mortality, two flawed people, fully and intensely aware of the limitations and pain and hard-earned scar tissue of each other, nonetheless commit to each other and fight to make it work. And yet, when I think on my twenty-five years of marriage, part of me thinks it would be nice if we really did know each other back then.

A quick side note: some people have objected to *Warrior*, saying it's basically a road show. In other words, it's a trivial play, a silly play, a play that we should take no more seriously than we did the road shows we performed as teenagers. I think that response is an insult to both *Warrior* and to road shows—which I regard as a wonderfully vital and interesting dramatic form. I argue that it's nothing of the kind—that it's in fact an important and valuable play, not just a pop culture reflection of mainstream culture (which it surely is) but also a play that urges us to take seriously the most serious issues imaginable, issues of life and family.

Mormons do, in fact, embrace a very different mainstream musical that in approach and structure really is a road show. I'm referring to Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Humorous songs in a variety of musical styles, a story that's a comic take on a Bible story, didactic interludes that don't really intrude on the fun very much, plus Pharaoh as Elvis—it's a well-nigh perfect road show. It's just a little longer than most ward road shows, plus it generally has better production values.

And so, finally, though I doubt I'll ever like *Saturday's Warrior* all that much, I have grown to respect it immensely, not just because it marks a significant cultural moment in Mormonism, but because it's such a fiercely resonant personal statement. I may disagree with some specific ideas it conveys—ideas that strike me as somewhat on the periphery of its central concerns—but I'm moved by the larger issue at its heart, its celebration of the inviolable sanctity of human life. "Who are these children coming down?" They're our brothers

and sisters, fellow children of our Heavenly Father. In Africa and in Asia, in Indonesia or the Middle East, we're all here because we chose to be here, and we waited for our moment with great anticipation and longing. *Warrior* calls for us to honor our common humanity. And that seems to me a very good subject for a musical.



ERIC SAMUELSEN

(top, back, in glasses) as playwright/director with cast on the set of his play *The Way We're Wired*. Produced by the Nauvoo Theatrical Society at the Center Street Theater in Orem, Utah—2003

unknown photographer

## A Troubadour in Zion

MARVIN PAYNE

I AM REMINISCING PUBLICLY in response to a request from this issue's guest editor, Scott Bronson, who asked for a "part travelogue, part personal essay, part testimony of what it has been like to be a singer/songwriter in the Mormon culture for mumblety-mumble years."

About fifteen or twenty years ago, I attended a performance of the Utah Valley Symphony in which my former wife played violin as did the wife of Greg Hansen, legendary LDS composer and arranger with a lo-o-ong string of Pearls. At that time, he was only potentially legendary, though already fully nice. As I sat down next to him in the balcony of the Provo Tabernacle to listen to our wives play, he leaned over and asked, with a hush of reverence, "How does it feel to be the Father of Mormon Popular Music?"

I think my response was something like, "Um, well, uh, I think . . . What?"

A decade or so before this embarrassing Tabernacle moment I had been, admittedly, passionate about using my picking and grinning skills for anything that overtly explored, celebrated, or expounded upon the principles of the restored gospel. It was, as a marketing friend of mine would put it, my Unique Purchase Appeal. Had that marketing friend been around and talking like that in the early days of the movement, I would have been appalled. But there you are—I was, if not exactly unique, decidedly different.

I think the designation *movement* sort of slipped out a second ago. That's because there really was one. (There may have been many, unfolding simultaneously, but the only one I was aware of was in Provo, 1970 through about 1974, when it began changing into something else. Thus I apologize for writing as though the Provo stuff was *the* movement, but like I said, it's all I saw.) There were some differences between that movement and what's going on now. For one, it was a whole lot smaller. There was one band called The Free Agency and two solo players, me and Debbie Au. And Free Agency guys backed me up. Debbie, when she wasn't being the incredibly tender solo poetess, was the thunder-and-lightning Janis Joplin in front of the Free Agency, so I guess you'd call that a pretty small movement, artist-wise.

Another difference was where the musicians came from. The Free Agency

players orbited around Dave Zandonatti and Randy Guzman, who had been the Moby Grape that toured when the Moby Grape that recorded announced they didn't want to tour. San Francisco psychedelia to the max. Richard Ellsworth came out of various rowdy Utah County bands. And all three of these guys had recently come off a broad potpourri of hallucinogens. This was characteristic. I was the odd one. I'd never done drugs, but nobody could tell. I was there because the audience was there.

The audience was another differentiating factor. They were either all on drugs, getting off drugs, clean but helping their friends get off drugs, or clean but wishing they were on drugs except the Word of Wisdom kind of stood in the way. Also the concerts were among the very few places where these people could walk in and hear the gospel preached without everybody staring at them or scooting to the other end of the pew. And as many as came to hear the music came to hear the gospel. It wasn't mainstream and wouldn't be for many years to come.

Another difference was that there was virtually no commercial aspect to it, no marketing infrastructure. Nobody saw any money in it. It cost twenty bucks to rent the Provo High auditorium and admission was two bucks. LDS bookstores sold only books, and only books that were true. (Author and general renaissance man Don Marshall wrote a couple of books of terrific short stories back then, set in Mormondom, and drove the length of Utah trying to place them in LDS book outlets, typically a dedicated counter in a hardware or fabric store. In one such place somewhere along U.S. 89, the proprietress looked at him quizzically when he described his book as *fiction*. This was a new word for her. He explained that fiction is stories that aren't literally true. She said, "Oh dear, I don't think we could try to sell anything that wasn't true.") The only exception was the astounding success of Carol Lynn Pearson's self-published poetry, which simultaneously thrilled and embarrassed LDS booksellers universally. (It was Gerald Pearson's company, Trilogy Arts, that produced both my and Debbie Au's first albums. And promptly went out of business on account. We built it, they didn't come.)

So for the next five years I sold my LPs door-to-door to the BYU kids, cranking out a new one about every nine months, refinancing the van to get it pressed, innocent of the fact that I was crossing LDS pop over from freak culture to straight culture.

In that process, I knocked one day on Alan Osmond's door at the Riviera Apartments. I didn't know one Osmond from another, in spite of the fact that they were the biggest act on the planet. He rushed me in with a conspiratorial

air (he knew more about me than I knew about him) and ushered me into their brand-new underground studio and unveiled an album they were about to set loose upon the world: *The Plan*. I was astonished. The songs had names like "War in Heaven." The label was Kolob Records. He was as excited as a puppy. I said, "Man, I've been telling people you guys were gonna surprise us!" (He was too excited to notice what an indecorous remark that was.) *The Plan* tanked, too. But it was indicative of things to come. Not from the Osmonds, but from lots of other talented folks.

Along with the recording and peddling, I performed a lot—I mean, more than just on people's doorsteps. Actually, I never played on a doorstep; people always kindly asked me in if they wanted to hear anything. I don't remember anybody being rude, except the piano movers who came to take away the rented piano that I was playing in some girls' apartment. I thought they might sense that they should wait another minute and a half until the song was over, but they didn't. It wasn't too hard to keep playing it when they first started lifting, but it got pretty hard when they stood it on its end and I had to play perpendicular to sea level.

I performed a lot. Among many youth conferences was one at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California, where the kids screamed and pressed close to the stage and laughed hysterically at everything I said, even the serious stuff. This wasn't because I was famous and much anticipated (I was absolutely unknown); this was because it was a concert involving guitars and they were behaving like they thought they were supposed to, like they'd seen on television. It had nothing to do with me.

There was also the night in Twin Falls, when I played an hour and a half for one person. There were actually three bodies there, but one was the guy who was supposed to have promoted the event (as it turned out, I had to ask the Cub Scouts if they wouldn't mind moving their pack meeting to the Primary room—the concert not only wasn't promoted, it wasn't even actually scheduled) so I'm not counting him—he had to come. Nor am I counting the guy who'd been asked to take me home with him and give me a place to sleep—he had to come. I'm only counting the young lady who, when the promoter ran across the street to the institute and abashedly asked, "Hey, does anybody want to come to this?" said, "Sure, what the heck!" When I was through performing, she just said, from her seat on the front row, "That was good! Thanks!"

There were nights, too, like the one in Bowling Green, Ohio, where young adults from Minneapolis to Houston had gathered for a massive conference, and people listened really well and sensed that something quite different was

going down on stage. They grabbed it like you grab an iron rod in the mist.

Any thumbnail history of my little career has to include Guy Randle, my regular songwriting partner on albums five, six, and seven, seven being *The Planemaker*, which we hammered out largely on interstates east of the Mississippi, bouncing around from institute to institute on concert tours. Guy and Bill Cushenberry had been fruitful contributors to earlier albums as players, and if I hadn't been so "brand" conscious they would have been acknowledged a lot more prominently than they were.

Though we saw a lot of the country, and a lot of the country saw us (at least the Latter-day Saints that sprouted in it here and there), the artist that really brought LDS pop to the ears and attention of the Saints was one I met while engineering a session one night in Rosewood, the studio that Guy and I gave birth to and that Guy raised to a rich maturity. The clients this particular evening were members of a band of players whose average age was about ninety—a little old sister played a wide boom-chuck style of piano; a wiry guy who was nearly deaf played really sweet trumpet (he was one of about three trumpeters I've heard in my life who could play the thing softly); and a great big guitar player (both the player and his Gibson archtop were big), who played through such a thumpy amp that he achieved the double benefit of it not mattering what chords he played and eliminating the need for a bass player. The drummer had recently died, an occupational hazard with this band, so his daughter was sitting in on drums—and doing well. It was Janice Kapp Perry.

As a writer, she was prolific, accessible, tuneful, sound in her composition (or composed in her sound), and, most importantly, trustworthy in every way. No flowers, beads, or hallucinogens. Suddenly nobody was offended that there were drums and electric instruments and many tracks of Felicia Sorenson singing very hip and velvety backups. Jan wrote this stuff and turned it over to arrangers like Randy Kartchner, Roger Hoffman, and Greg Hansen, all of whom had worn earplugs and played in rock bands at one time or another. And of course she begot Steven Kapp Perry, without whom most of the works on my résumé would not exist (not to mention all the works on his).

Then came Mike McLean (who took most of Jan's virtues, particularly the accessibility, even further), Ken Cope, Kurt and Sam, Julie de Azevedo (it's dangerous to start lists), and the ball was rolling—or maybe some little bit of the stone cut from the mountain without hands.

Speaking of de Azevedos, Julie's dad, Lex, produced my first album, *Ships of Dust*. (Julie was a tiny kid then—a cute one.) The album ends with a song called "Saturday's Dream," a song about the lastest of the last days. While we



were mapping out the recording of that song, Lex said, "It's funny, but you know, Doug Stewart and I are working on something like this. It's kind of a fireside thing we're calling *Saturday's Warrior*." I wished him luck. He didn't need it.

If *Saturday's Warrior* had been a guy, it would have been the Mormon Elvis. There had been nothing like it. Apart from the Three D's, whose reach was valiant but limited, no one had ever offered Latter-day Saints something that had so appealed to their latent hunger for a culture. Finally, there was something about us! "Good, bad, or ugly, pack the kids—we're going!" One of the most glaring gaps in our cultural journal keeping is laid bare every time I hear a kid say, "Wow, y'know that video we watch every Sunday? I heard some people made it into a play!"

(There are few McDonald's restaurants in the Western United States in which someone has not stared at me for a minute and then asked, "Hey, aren't you that guy in *Saturday's Warrior*?" To which my current reply is, "Yup. Got any teenagers that need slapping?" Not long ago, a man said, "Hey, didn't I see you in the play *Hancock County*?" I almost kissed him.)

People don't usually make the imaginative leap required to recognize that if something works in one medium, it just might work in another, so Lex and Doug's play may not have spawned a lot of Mormon rockers, but it certainly dimmed the lights and lit the candles.

I realized early on that although the Church can do a zillion things well, it can't bear my testimony for me. Nor does it dictate the language in which I bear it. Some people speak English, they bear theirs in English. Some people speak Tagalog, they bear theirs in Tagalog. I speak banjo. King David sang and danced about the gospel. Should I choose to do less? I don't have any marketable skills; I pretty much have to be a song-and-dance man. I know a Zimbabwean choreographer who joined the Church in England. He read the Book of Mormon in a couple of days and heard two missionary discussions at a sitting. At his first testimony meeting as a Latter-day Saint, he paused on his way to the pulpit and whispered to the bishop, "I don't think I have words to express my joy." The bishop gave him a go-ahead look and my friend, after standing speechless before his new brothers and sisters for a moment, did a front flip over the pulpit, vaulted his way to the back of the chapel, stuck his fist in the air and shouted, "Yes!" and then sat down. I'm just lucky enough to be working in a craft that can use words.

I don't flatter myself to think that anybody's walking in my footsteps, but I do see an awful lot of people walking the same path I walked, generally not having a clue as to who may have walked it before. Nobody blazed this path; it's

always been there. Moses walked it, David walked it, Eliza R. Snow walked it, Bob Dylan walked it. I haven't really kept up with who's walking it now. I like to hear Cherie Call sing. My son Sam runs circles around me artistically. At home I listen to myself play the guitar. In the car I listen to NPR. When I really need to hear music, I put on Keith Jarrett or J. S. Bach; I haven't heard either for a while. All I know for sure is that if you live in a Utah ward that doesn't have on its roll somebody who makes CDs, you live in a pretty un-hip ward.

I have a little studio in the basement of my cabin where I record people. My favorites are those who've never done it before, who feel like their dreams are coming true right before their very ears. Very few who find me in the Yellow Pages come in with songs that aren't something like the ones I dared to do thirty-five years ago. But for these new writers, the "dare" is gone. Now it's just what you do with your musical gifts. I love that. It's exciting to watch.

So exciting that every now and then I do it again myself.



MARVIN PAYNE

singer/songwriter, in concert at Alpine Legacy Park in Alpine, Utah—2005

Frank Bott,  
photographer

## The Sacredness of Moving in Our Bodies: An Interview with Pat Debenham

J. SCOTT BRONSON

**P**AT DEBENHAM IS A PROFESSOR of Modern Dance and Music Theatre at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. He is a Certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst and for fifteen years was codirector of Contemporary Dance Works—a semiprofessional modern dance company in Utah. His work as a choreographer often rides the edge between humor and pathos. He and his wife, Kathie, also a dancer, conduct community workshops entitled *Move and Be Moved*. Most recently, they joyously presented a concert entitled *Debenham Dance*, which included their three twenty-something dancing daughters, their grandchildren, and their three sons-in-law, who range from accountants to computer geeks.

I met with Pat in his office at BYU, and we talked while he ate a salad from Café Rio. He's a busy man and has to multitask often. I wish I could convey the musical quality of Pat's speech through the transcribed dialogue. Even without the chewing breaks, there are contemplative pauses and melodic emphases that . . . well, they dance. His phrases and inflections spin through the air, twisting, leaping, barely touching the floor at times, and at other times coming down with precision and just the right amount of gravity.

BRONSON. What is dance good for? What's its purpose?

DEBENHAM. That depends on who you're talking to. Some people might say it's good for nothing. Some would say it's good for getting a wife, good as a social activity. So, what kind of dance are you talking about? Are you talking about concert dance?

BRONSON. There's a lot of emphasis on folk dance in our Mormon culture. A dance from this country, a dance from that country, something that represents this or that culture or people. That seems to be really highly thought of, but the kind of dance that I'm talking about is the kind where you just use your body to tell a story.

DEBENHAM. Why does it have to tell a story?

BRONSON. Well, or express something.

DEBENHAM. So we're probably talking about concert dance, which will center our conversation around modern dance and ballet. That's not to suggest that folk dance, ballroom dance, jazz, hip-hop—all those forms—can't in some fashion be put into concert forms. They often are. Some are highly specific, highly artistic, and express something about a culture.

Dee Winterton,<sup>1</sup> my mentor, is often quoted as saying, "Dance represents the culture from which it springs." I think that's a really important and essential statement. Each dance form emanates from a specific cultural context. I think it's one of the things that we see in modern dance particularly—and probably in ballet as well. Modern dance, as it's situated in Mormondom, is such a new art form and, depending on the choreographer and the event, is often defined by the event and the need. In relationship to the more established art forms, modern dance is just beginning to find its voice. I think that as a Mormon art form, it's just starting to get its feet underneath itself, which seems to be an appropriate metaphor to use here.

So . . . what is it good for? It's good for entertainment sometimes. I personally think that anything that is artful ought to be entertaining anyway. That doesn't mean it's like musical theatre where it has to grab our attention like a song-and-dance man, but it certainly needs to engage us in some way. It needs to get our attention, call for us to attend to it in a way that lets us know that it's unique, that it has substance in what it does.

BRONSON. So "entertainment" doesn't necessarily have to mean "I laughed."

DEBENHAM. Right. Right.

BRONSON. It's something that brings me out of myself for a while.

DEBENHAM. Yes. What is it good for? It's good for, if I'm the choreographer, perhaps a few laughs in a rehearsal every once in a while. (Gotta keep things light, you know.) Often I think it serves a community, the audience that it intends itself for.

BRONSON. How does it serve a community? I know as a writer, a playwright, or an actor what I mean by that phrase, but what does a dancer mean by it?

1. BYU dance faculty member Dee Winterton provided vision and creative energy to any project or organization he was involved with. He danced professionally with Repertory Dance Theatre and Ririe-Woodbury, for ten years was the creative force behind Sundance's Summer Theatre, served as choreographer and director for the Young Ambassadors, and gave focus and direction to a growing Modern Dance program at BYU. Always a missionary for dance and the gospel, he believed passionately that dance and entertainment could and should be used as a vehicle to take the message of the Restoration to the world. His life's mission was tragically cut short when he was killed in a car accident in 1984. His memory and mission live on in the hundreds and thousands of individuals that he touched.

DEBENHAM. Well, I think it serves a community because it can uplift. It can cause us to think. It can cause us to see the world in a new way, to learn something, to know something that we didn't know before—and it can delight us. I think it can serve us on many levels. And like any art form, it can put forth ideologies and pedantic messages if we need it to or want it to.

BRONSON. Is that harder to do with dance, do you think, than it is with writing?

DEBENHAM. Yeah. I mean, that is a great question because I think dance is so much like poetry. But it sits in a very odd kind of place because poetry, even though it's words, somehow is ethereal—in and of itself. And dance—again, modern dance and ballet—sits in two kinds of very odd places. What we do is ephemeral, abstract, and metaphoric but is simultaneously very concrete.

BRONSON. And not everybody knows the language.

DEBENHAM. Unfortunately there aren't many people who *think* they know the language. It is also physical and very, very present. So it sits in these two places where we want it to mean something specific because in our lives, our physicalities mean something. I do this digging gesture and you know I'm shoveling. Or I touch somebody and it means something; it has meaning. Poetry kind of floats around, and dance floats around, but we want it to be concrete. We want it to tell, as you suggested at the first of the interview, a story. It's interesting to me that we don't require that of a Mozart requiem—maybe a requiem we do—but we don't ask one of his concertos or symphonies to "mean something." But when we see movement on stage, there's this abstract sense of something that's incredibly physical and *not* abstract. We think it should mean something specific. And we don't know what to do with that. We don't know *how* to experience that.

BRONSON. Does that mean that we, as a culture, need to learn the language better? It's got to be a two-way street, don't you think? How do you get the audience involved and educated? How do you get *more* of an audience involved? It seems to me that's always the goal of any artist: "It's nice that my family likes this, but I would like to get more people to come and see it and *understand* what I'm doing."

DEBENHAM. Right.

BRONSON. How do we do that?

DEBENHAM. I've been involved in modern dance for the last thirty years, and I've found that it's increasingly more difficult.

BRONSON. Just in this culture or generally?

DEBENHAM. I think in general. In the '60s and '70s and into the '80s, particularly in the '70s and '80s, there was a proliferation of dance companies. Money

was coming from the government to help support dance and there was this explosion. It went into the schools. We were trying to make sure that dance was supported. That's not the case now. I don't know what the statistics are, but many substantive dance companies folded because they couldn't get funding. It didn't help that mainstream audiences weren't coming to performances. I think when you have shows on TV like *Dancing with the Stars* and *So You Think You Can Dance*, when you have MTV, when you have so much "entertainment" dance and you have video games and DVDs and CDs and iPods and everything else that you can think of to entertain you, dance just doesn't seem so important anymore. Live theatre doesn't seem so important anymore.

BRONSON. Going into a dark room where somebody's doing this stuff, live, in front of you, costs a little bit more money.

DEBENHAM. It does.

BRONSON. What's the place of dance in Mormon culture?

DEBENHAM. I think dance in Mormon culture is used to celebrate. Through it we claim our place in the world and acknowledge our heritage. It fulfills a social function as well by getting people together. Obviously I'm not talking about the artistic forms; I'm not talking about the abstract forms. I'm not talking about ballet and modern dance, though they can be celebratory. In the dance department at BYU we find ourselves making the claim that our present performance-driven program is a reflection of the value Mormons have placed on dance throughout our history—well, what did we do? The claim is that we danced our way across the plains. We did, but they were square dances. They were *social activities* and we have taken those social activities and we have put them on stage as theatrical forms and they do very well. We love them. What did we just have in the Conference Center? A major celebration in honor of our Hispanic brothers and sisters. There was dancing galore. It featured social and cultural dance forms of the people. The cultural forms take precedence over the artistic forms. The fact that they are more accessible and seem to be easier to understand is at some level a mystery to me because generally they don't mean anything more than what abstract modern dance does. I mean, what's clogging? How is that any less abstract than modern dance? Modern dance, a lot of times, doesn't provide narrative. Ballet often tends to do so more. Ballet also aligns itself closely with the music that is classical. That increases its acceptance within the culture. Primarily though, at present, dance in the Mormon culture is valued as a celebration.

Dance has the potential to be instructive and I don't even know that that

means pedantic; I think it means it's instructive. It *can* tell us about our life journey in an important and sophisticated way.

BRONSON. Enlightening? Inspiring?

DEBENHAM. Both. This last year at BYU, dancEnsemble created a work entitled *His Story, Her Story, Our Story*. It was based on interviews that my students did with their relatives—father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle. It didn't matter. They could choose who they wanted to. We turned these interviews into a theatre piece, a theatre *dance* piece that used text, music, and primarily dance as a way of revealing what it means to be family. It was created specifically in response to our doctrinal imperative to connect to our ancestors and to do genealogy. It moved *that* connection—of fathers to sons, mothers to daughters—it moved that doctrinal principle forward in a way that was very powerful. I think it was one of the most powerful pieces that I've seen. In a very real way, we "embodied" our family histories.

In the process of creating the dance I knew there was the potential for the dance to be saccharine. Except for one man there were all women in the dance. I was concerned that this was going to be a Young Women presentation. It did not turn out that way at all. I think part of the reason for that was the way that we set it up. First of all we put together questions that we wanted to ask our relatives and discussed what would be the most important. We defined three particular categories that we wanted these questions to be in. One was "Love and Loss." One was "Defining Moments." I can't remember what the other one was. Because of the way that we chose the concepts we were dealing with, we ended up with a very rich tapestry of situations. Several sections dealt with the hard things of life: depression, loss of a spouse, divorce, and the consequences of infidelity. There were also celebratory sections where love, courtship, sibling camaraderie were the themes. One whole section was about how you care for those who need to be cared for. Well, in order to show that, you have to show what they're caring for, what the problems are. One section came from an interview with a mother who was so distraught that she ended up locking herself in a closet because she was so depressed she couldn't take care of her life or her kids. Her husband came home and found her in a closet. These were delicate subjects that were dealt with in very appropriate and profound ways. Through art, issues were addressed that we don't and/or can't address from the pulpit. One of the responses afterwards was, "We don't ever talk about these things in church. It was brave of you to address them on stage and so poignantly and powerfully."

BRONSON. Julie Ahlander did a piece called *The Wall*.

DEBENHAM. The Vietnam one.

BRONSON. Yes. There's no music, just text. And the dance is not a kind of dance I've ever seen before. The type of thing Les Ditson would have done. The dancers became the wall, or the people—the spirits—in the wall, is the way it came to me. At the end of this piece, the narrator is talking about a specific individual he was trying to make contact with. When the man goes up to the wall made of people and reaches out to touch the name, there's a dancer there whose hand comes up to touch his hand. It gives me chills right now just thinking about it.

It seems to me that a dance artist wants to do the same things that every other kind of artist wants to do. A painter, or a writer, or a singer wants to move people or enlighten them, just in a different medium.

DEBENHAM. Right.

BRONSON. Do you think there's a fear or a distrust, in our culture, of dance?

DEBENHAM. I think there's a fear *and* distrust . . . of the body.

BRONSON. Of the body.

DEBENHAM. Mm-hm.

BRONSON. A friend of mine said to me once, "I think the reason dance gets so much short shrift in our culture is because the main tool is your body and our culture does not celebrate the body. It's more frightened of talking about or looking at the body than it is anything else." Okay, yeah, it's good for working hard, but . . .

DEBENHAM. Right.

BRONSON. Is there a way around this? Is there something we can do about that?

DEBENHAM. I think that people have to be presented with good examples of the way that the body can be used as a celebratory instrument. It can't be denied that so many visible representations of the body not only in dance, but also in art, theatre, and popular culture objectify and degrade the body. We have to put forth things that are "lovely and of good report." (I use the phrase somewhat facetiously and at the same time understanding its deeper meaning.) For me, lovely and of good report are about truth, and truth comes in so many different forms. It's ultimately the Holy Ghost that testifies of truth, and that can happen by looking at a flower where you're just amazed at the vibrancy of the color and the delicacy of the petals. That truth and that sacredness can be there. I think what we understand as sacred, and the sacred use of the body, is very limited . . . possibly because we're mortal. We're still caught in the religious sensibility of the body being—the *passions* of the body—those things which take us away from Christ. And I *don't* think

it needs to be that way. I think passion is about liveliness, passion is about engagement, and it can be used and channeled in ways that are exciting; ways that support what we believe or what we *know* as Latter-day Saints.

BRONSON. It occurs to me that to many Mormons, the body is the symbol of the fall from grace and therefore dirty and filthy. Except that the goal in our religion is to get the body to work in perfect conjunction with the spirit. We don't have to wait until the hereafter to start doing that. We should start working on that now, rather than thinking, oh, it's a dirty thing. We'll only do what we have to with it.

DEBENHAM. Right.

BRONSON. And dance could do quite a bit to help us accomplish that.

DEBENHAM. Right. The Fall presents a really interesting question or quandary here. One of the things that I think is so interesting is that we tie our physicality to the scripture that talks about the natural man. We assume that that means it's our physicality. We assume that the passions that our bodies have come from some place that would be contrary to Christ. I just wonder whether or not our thinking is backwards. Why is it we give the bad rap to the body when ultimately what supposedly controls the body is the spirit? So, if the spirit controls the body, why are we saying that it's the body's fault that we're doing what we're doing? Being a physical man, I can say, "Well, it's my body that did it." That kind of thinking puts me at odds with my body. It reinforces an already rampant sense of Cartesian duality and pits body against spirit when we ought to be thinking more holistically about our natures. When I say, "It's my body and my spirit," I acknowledge their tandemness. They are not separate, and I think it's that separate sensibility that we have a hard time moving beyond. In Mormonism we have not yet moved beyond that duality of body and spirit. Most of us feel like, as soon as we get rid of our bodies, then we'll be all right again. But we're taught that whatever that spirit wanted *in* the body, it's going to want *out* of the body. So, I think that whole thing is very curious.

Most of us don't understand or haven't experienced the sacredness of *moving* in our bodies. I think that sacredness can happen in a work situation, where you just have all the physical power that you need. I think it can happen in sports, too. With dance though, again I'm speaking of concert dance and I think it's particularly true of modern dance, there is something about the sensual nature of the form that is read as sexual, not sacred. I think it also has to do with our sense of what we feel we can reveal, what parts of the body we should see or not see. I have a very different sensibility

than, I think, most members of the Church would have regarding that.

Randy Boothe, the director of the Young Ambassadors, experienced this a few years ago. This example doesn't have to do with revealing costumes but says a lot about how some church members think the body should be used in performance. He did a tour to Arizona. Shortly after he returned he was just beside himself because letters had been sent to the President of the University that in essence stated, "Your show is inappropriate for families." They were doing *West Side Story* and they performed a fairly typical, innocuous lift, where the girl's leg is bent underneath in a passé kind of position and the guy picks her up under the thigh and the armpit, lifts her up in the air, twirls her around, and lets her down. Well, some people were offended that the young man would have his hand on the inside of her thigh. That was inappropriate for a young man to do. We (to be interpreted as righteous, active members of the Church) shouldn't touch *anyone* in a place where his or her garment would be. Well, if that's the case, any lifts anybody would do in dance would almost of necessity be "inappropriate." You would have to lift dancers up by their hands and their feet. One person couldn't do that. It's just not possible. I realize this is an extreme example, but it does make an important point. What happens in our culture is we end up—by not wanting to offend someone—we end up censoring ourselves and not allowing ourselves, out of fear, to enjoy what the full possibility might be. Maybe as LDS artists we can't expect that what is appropriate within the context of the Church, or supported by the Church, is also the full spectrum of what we should, or can, do. I find myself, as an LDS artist, wanting *everything* I do to be, somehow, sanctioned by the Church. Well, even as I speak I *want* that to happen and I think that it should, but at fifty-seven I have to ask myself, "And in what century do you think that's going to happen?" So I probably need to take it on myself to do more independent projects, projects outside of the institutional church. Well, that's hard to do in dance. It takes money and time and effort.

BRONSON. I've acted in a lot of plays and my involvement in one of them [*Trail of Dreams* by James Arrington, Marvin Payne, and Steven Kapp Perry] turned out to be one of the most—if not *the* most—worshipful of things I've ever done, from my point of view. The period of time that it took to rehearse and perform that play was a very worshipful, a very sacred time for me. Does that happen for you in dance sometimes?

DEBENHAM. It has. I have experienced the sacred in and through dance in the studio and on stage. One of the most spiritual experiences I've had was in

a studio situation. It was with a cast of non-LDS dancers. It was David Dorfman's company, a professional company from New York. I watched them rehearse down in our studio. It was one of the most transformative experiences, one of the most spiritual experiences I've ever had, because these individuals genuinely and generously gave to each other. There were six people rehearsing together—and *you* know, in rehearsals, performers often give themselves permission to back off. These people didn't. They gave everything that was within them . . . in a very human way . . . that transcended the moment and was spiritual for me.

Have I had any extended experiences where I've felt that? I don't know. Probably the place that it happens most clearly for me, or most powerfully, is in teaching dance. Because in those moments I can see the humanity, I can see the struggle, I can see the attempt of the individual trying to overcome whatever they're trying to overcome in the moment . . . whether it's emotional things, physical, functional, expressive. That's when I see the sacred.

BRONSON. What is the dream of the Mormon dancer? The great dream of the great Mormon dancer?

DEBENHAM. The *great* dream of the *great* Mormon dancer? Well, the dream would be to have everybody be able to experience—this sounds egotistical and it's meant in a larger sense, though it's specifically about me—I would want them to be able to experience dance in the same way that I do. With the same kind of passion. Now that doesn't mean they necessarily have to like the same kind of dance that I do—although that'd be nice too because then they might come and pay for it. (Just kidding.) I think my dream for us as a culture would be to be more open to a variety of aesthetic and spiritual experiences. For myself, I experience the Spirit when I listen to a lot of Christian music that's *not* LDS. It's the praise and your hands to the ceiling kind of stuff. I love it. It just sends me through the roof. And at the same time I'm thinking, I've never seen that phrase in the scriptures: "The Holy Ghost is going to raise the roof." It only says the Holy Ghost will come and testify to us through a still, small voice. So that's a dichotomy for me because of what my own personal experience is and what the scriptures or the Church tells me that I should be able to experience it—in *this* way. So however we define ourselves (either from the pulpit or culturally), I would not like to see our aesthetic and spiritual sensitivities dissolved in any way. Because I think our expressions will come, the *form* will come, from the culture. I look forward to a time when the institutional church will foster and encourage a concert form of dance that is a genuine expression of our present culture—one that is shaped by

doctrine and an LDS way of thinking and being. One that celebrates not only our diversity but also our complexity.

BRONSON. In 1976, Elder Packer gave a talk here at BYU, which turned out to be kind of offensive to some artists because he used the phrase, quoting somebody else, "artists are more temper than mental." But he talks about Mormon artists *extending* the culture, which can be interpreted in two or three different ways, at least. Extending our own culture by opening ourselves up to other cultures and making them a part of our own, which sounds a lot like Brigham Young's statement to the effect that if it's good and it's true, it belongs to us. It could also mean developing our culture so that we can take it further out into the world, but, listening to you, it occurs to me that it could also mean broadening our understanding of our culture to allow us to express ourselves in freer, more open ways.

DEBENHAM. I like Eric Samuelsen's sensibilities about this. He is a celebrated, widely published and produced BYU theatre professor. His definition of who can produce "Mormon art" includes those people who are not just card carrying, active Mormons. He includes those who are no longer at the center of the Church and even those who have been members of the Church and have somehow culturally moved to some other place. He has a very wide umbrella . . . that is also wide in terms of what the aesthetic is as well—what topics, what the form of the presentation would be like. There's something that's appealing about that to me. I am not suggesting here that to make meaningful art any of us have to remove ourselves from the Church but I guess being in what I consider to be a marginalized art form, not only in the LDS community, but in the national community, I would like it if people would expand their cultural sensitivities, their aesthetic sensitivities.

I was talking to David Warner [the director of music and cultural arts for the Church] about this. I was weeping and wailing and gnashing my teeth: "Why don't they like us?" His philosophy is that you've got to give them a reason to like you. Well, does that mean that you have to dumb it down? My initial response is, yes. My next response is, no, you don't have to. You *can* find ways of presenting material that has substance, and it may only be for a specific audience. It may *not* be for the Church at large. But you have to keep your vision, your understanding of what truth is, because it's about reaching out. It's about service in some way. It's about finding unity and wholeness for all of us. Is that not what we are to become? At *one* with each other, bearing each other's burdens, accepting what each of us has to offer? Without judgment. So often in cultural experiences, in aesthetics, we



automatically put up blocks so we cannot become as one. We have to be able to walk in other people's shoes, their moccasins, in order to be able to even understand that. I think I've found of late more ability in myself to be able to do that so that I can somehow sit in that person's place and understand what it might be that they are considering—what they're thinking. It doesn't necessarily mean that I have to come out of it liking it or say that that's what I value. But I *can* say there is value in it.

BRONSON. In the process of it.

DEBENHAM. Not only in the process but in the product, unless, of course, it's abject, immoral, and unethical. Those are very different situations. Most of what we produce isn't that kind of art though. Its intent most often is pure, "lovely and of good report." In a world where darkness pervades, perhaps we ought to be more open to each other's works and support, through our attendance and our pocket books, diverse works of substance that truly are as Dee says, "an expression of the culture from which it springs."

From the archives, an excerpt from

## Corianton, An Aztec Romance. A Romantic Spectacular Drama, in Four Acts<sup>1</sup>

ORESTES U. BEAN

### ACT I.

RELIGIO SPECTACLE.

FUNCTION OF PROLOGUE.

INTERIOR:—Hall of Justice Awaiting Trial of Korihor, the Anti-Christ.

At rise of Curtain throng of sixty or more citizens of Zarahemla enter L. in twos, threes, or more, earnestly discussing the approaching trial of Korihor, the Anti-Christ. ZENOS talking with OMNES,<sup>2</sup> C. LAMARCK talking with OMNES, R. ZENNOCK talking with OMNES, L. Mob kept logically in motion.

ZENOS. Say what thou wilt, Korihor is a blasphemer.

LAMARCK. What law hath he broken to thus be brought to trial?

OMNES. Yes, yes, what law? Name the law.

LAMARCK. We are met here in our Hall of Justice to hear the trial of Korihor, the Anti-Christ, and what his offense? (*Throng interested—assembling.*)

ZENOS. He hath spoken blasphemy against the law—against his God. Hath not blasphemy been criminal from the beginning?

LAMARCK. Since the reign of kings hath ceased with us, we have no law to punish blasphemy.

ZENOS. Search the Scriptures, my friend; search the Scriptures.

LAMARCK. The Scriptures?

OMNES. Ha, ha, ha, ha. (*Throng rapidly assembling from various parts of the temple.*)

LAMARCK. We are not governed by the laws written in the Scriptures, but by those laws of our own making.

1. To enhance readability, we have made minor changes to the original *Corianton* text; however, many of its character-adding typographic and editorial inconsistencies and mistakes remain. —Eds. This excerpt appears courtesy of the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

2. Or all, everybody.



JASPER. The dial points the hour.

(AMULOKI and SEANTUM stroll in from prison yard, R.) Our greatest friend, our Amuloki (*meets him extending both hands*). Hath Nephiah, the Chief Judge, granted our request that we may see the prisoner?

AMULOKI. Ay, yes all may see this friend of freedom when the sentinel announces.

OMNES. 'Tis well; I wish to see him.

JASPER. Our Judge is growing liberal.

ZENNOCK. He had always been so; liberal and just.

OMNES (*some of them*). Thou sayest well! He hath, etc., etc.

AMULOKI. My friends of Zarahemla, it gives me joy to present to you a Zoramite I'm proud to know—Seantum, foremost man in Antionum.

OMNES. (*All bow low.*)

SEANTUM. Noble sirs, it is a joy thus to meet you. (*As he bows he gives the Secret Gadianton Order sign of "Recognition."*)

JASPER (*advancing toward SEANTUM*). Thou art friend and brother. (*Signs "Return of Recognition," "Secrecy." They embrace and step aside, R. 1, for confidential talk.*)

AMULOKI. Thou wert discussing Korihor, him and his coming trial.

(SHIBLON enters L. and looking among the throng for his brother Corianton. Talking with OMNES R.)

I tell ye there is much truth in the complaints of Korihor. The High Priest and the Chief Judge are becoming too arbitrary in their rulings. There is too much said about law and order; and not enough regard paid to personal liberty.

SHIBLON (*coming down R. C.*). Tut man, whenever has a disturber of the peace, a blasphemer of God, any enemy to religion, come amongst us but he had taken refuge behind the cry of "liberty"?

JASPER (*to AMULOKI aside like*). 'Tis Shiblon, righteous son of High Priest Alma.

SHIBLON. Thus did Nehor in the first year of the reign of Judges. So did Amlici, five years later; and Korihor with like cunning, adopts their cry of Liberty.

OMNES. (*Some applaud—some sneer.*)

SHIBLON. Believe me, friends; not every one who cries out against God, religion, and the law, is a friend to freedom. Let not thy minds be carried away by the persuasion of men who prosper by violence (*looks significantly at AMULOKI*) and thrive on tumults.

(*Exit street, L. 3 R. All look significantly at each other.*)

JASPER. Umph! Pointed rebuke that.

AMULOKI. Why 'tis not to be wondered that the son of High Priest Alma should so speak.

OMNES. True, true, etc., etc.

AMULOKI. E'en though a stranger listed, had he overheard old Alma preaching in the Temple, he would know this man his pupil.

AMULOKI. (*Looking after SHIBLON.*) Bah, a stripling, who can but ape his father's cant. But Corianton, his brother a man of broad mind and deep conception, is a friend of Korihor and liberty.

JASPER. (*In mockery restraining him.*) Hush—h—h—h. You're in the Palace of God's High Priest, who smites with the words of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips slays the wicked. Ha, ha, ha, ha.

(*Laugh a scornful laugh.*)

AMULOKI. (*Mockingly.*) Ah, yes, I bend low in pardon. (*To OMNES.*) Why, think men, this is the abode of God's vice-gerent; the headquarters of Heaven on earth; and yet ye move with covered heads. (*Mock command.*) Come slaves, kneel; the ground on which ye stand is holy. Ha, ha, ha.

OMNES. (*Laugh and bow in mockery.*)

JASPER. Yet this is Zarahemla, that boasts of her liberty, and yet at the gates stand the minions of the High Priest and Chief Judge to question whence ye come and whither.

OMNES. (*Assent in pantomime.*)

(*SENTINEL enters from jail yard, R.*)

SENTINEL. Thou may'st see the prisoner now at any time.

OMNES. 'Tis well. Let us see him, etc.

AMULOKI. Guard, tell the people as they pass thee on the street, that Korihor, their friend; who would see them free, is brought from Gideon in bands for liberty's sake; and is soon to be tried before an imperious High Priest and tyrant judge for honest disbelief in the traditions of their fathers.

(*CORANTON leisurely strolls in from street, L. 3 R.*)

Tell them this and ask them if the time hath come when all men must be slaves to superstition.

(*SENTINEL turns as if to go.*)

(*Down C.*) Hold Sentinel, and tell them too; that one son at least of their good High Priest declares for Korihor and liberty. Now go.

(*SENTINEL exits R.*)

OMNES. Bravo, Corianton, Bravo!

CORANTON. Ah, friends, methinks they find this Korihor savage as a lion in his chains.

AMULOKI (*down to him affectionately*). And Corianton, always true, declares himself from priestcraft free.

CORANTON. Ay, tho' the priest, my father, sirs, I love beyond my words, these unseen powers they tell us of to me are fancy dreams. Why not a sign—or miracle to all of us be given?

OMNES. Yes, yes, etc., etc. (*Varied business.*) I have seen no sign, etc., etc.

ZENNOCK. Ah, the High Priest knoweth best.

CORANTON. Is God so choice that righteous ones alone may know?

JASPER (*aside to AMULOKI*). I never knew before how much we are in bondage.

AMULOKI (*aside to JASPER*). How dull thou art. (*Nudges him and winks significantly.*) The Priestly coffers must be filled.

CORANTON (*overheard it*). Priestly coffers—Hold, sir; no man, if friend to me as thou pretendest now, will insinuate so vile an insult. No other man, friend, or nay, can do it with impunity; and Amuloki, thou as well, must answer even now; for by my steel, I'll trow, I'll defend my father's honor. (*OMNES stand aghast; some pleased.*)

AMULOKI. Why Corianton, what's amiss; that thou should rant in such a strain?

CORANTON. What's amiss? Does thou presume I'll pass unnoticed such imputations 'gainst my father's name? Tho' I, as thou, am slow to see their logic of theology, to me my father's name is sacred. I know and here assert—also will here maintain—that my dear and reverend father hath labored with his own hands for his support, and hath never received one senine in his priestly calling. Thou know'st, too; so make amends; for I intend thou shalt. (*Taps his sword significantly.*) (*OMNES. Some applaud.*)

AMULOKI (*in mock apology*). Most noble friend and High Priest's son, thou hast ill understood my meaning. Thy father is above suspicious. (*Bows and winks for JASPER to interrupt the scene.*)

JASPER. Come, come, no more of this. Let's to the jail and see the prisoner. Mayhap we'll comfort be, and let him know at least that some are for him and freedom.

(*AMULOKI and JASPER in charge of mob, exit R. CORANTON much ruffled, slowly passes down R. SHIBLON who entered L., as OMNES were filing out to prison yard, passes down to him.*)

SHIBLON. Corianton, have no more to do with these people. Remember what I told thee on the yesterday. Heed not these gossip mongers. They mean no good to any stable cause.

CORANTON. Thou wouldst presume to guide thy brother? Why, when thou wert ill I tossed thee on my back and scaled the mountain peaks with thee so that thou mightest breathe a better air. I taught thee how to speed an arrow

straight. Thou wert quite delicate in thy youth. Nay, nay, dear brother, do not attempt to counsel me.

SHIBLON. Thine unbelief should smite thy conscience. Had mother lived, 'twould not be so.

CORANTON (*sighs*). Mother! Mother! what a dear kind mother she was. She loved her boys—Helaman, Shiblon and her wayward Corianton. She bid me heed their counsel; but in this I have sadly failed. What can I do to make amends?

SHIBLON. Heed our father's counsel.

CORANTON. Seriously, brother, I think this treatment of Korihor is too harsh. Our law protects a man in his belief; and tho' Korihor hath a proud bearing, and holds what thou believest to be dangerous views; still I think the authorities of Gideon exceed their jurisdiction in sending him bound to this city.

SHIBLON (*rather surprised at the speech*). Holds what I believe to be dangerous views? And does thou not believe them dangerous, too? Ah, Corianton, I am afraid the spirit of unbelief infused into thy soul when before he was here hath not yet been worked out.

CORANTON (*good naturedly*). Well, it hath not been the fault of my dear brother. (*Arm around him and good naturedly taps SHIBLON's lips with finger*) for I have heard little else since his departure from Zarahemla, but thy lame arguments in support of the shadowy traditions of our fathers, about the coming of the Messiah and His atonement.

SHIBLON. I am sorry to find thee in this mood my brother; and it grieves me to hear thee talk so lightly of things that are sacred; but if too much restraint hath been thrown upon the liberty of Korihor, by the authorities of Gideon, thou knowest full well that justice will be done him in the courts of our father and the Chief Judge.

SENTINEL (*entering*). Korihor would see his friend Corianton. (*Exit R.*)

SHIBLON. Corianton, do not go to see the blasphemer. (*Arms about him.*) It is the time of the day to consider the mission to reclaim the Zoramites. They are fast losing respect for the Faith and for the Law as well. Our father sent me to find thee and bring thee to the council. He wishes thee to be a party to the mission.

CORANTON. Thou mayest go, brother; but I will not. I have little relish for these dull councils; and as for converting the Zoramites, they may be as right in their theology as we, for aught I know. The whole subject is so wrapped in mystery that we can at least to be liberal and not bind men, and cast them into prison

for daring to assert their disbelief in these mysterious things.

SHIBLON. But it is the express wish of our father that thou shouldst attend the council. Out of respect for him, wilt thou not go?

CORANTON. Say to our good father, the Priest, that I am gone to visit one who is cast into prison for the cause of liberty. (*Seeing a pained look in SHIBLON's face, he forbears.*) Shiblon, go thou to the council; and give no further thought concerning me. (*Arm about him.*) Thy patience, thy goodness, thy deep conviction, maketh of thee a fit instrument of God. Not so with me; my wild love for liberty can ill brook the restraints of the Priesthood, and the skepticism ingrained in my very nature, disqualifies me for the ministry. I'll none of it till I see some manifestation of the power of God, spoken of so frequently by our father, and of which the Scriptures speak on nearly every page.

SHIBLON. Thou asketh for a sign as well?

CORANTON. And why not I? So, farewell, brother, I go to visit Korihor. (*Exit R. I E.*)

SHIBLON (*gazing after him*). Oh why is it that natural born leaders, those blessed with a Heaven born intelligence should be cursed with a doubting, rebellious spirit, that weighs down all their better parts and wrecks the hopes built on what their talents promise? O that some good angel would my brother meet, to shake off his doubting fears and give him back to us converted! Then how would shine that master power within him, which overawes men's minds and bends them to his purpose! (*Looking after him.*) Brother, flout me if thou wilt; but I'll follow thee thro' all thy fortunes, good or ill, and win thee yet to God.

RELIA. (*Enter from street, L. 3 E. Flower either in her hair, or a bouquet.*) Ah, Shiblon, thou art here.

SHIBLON. I must hasten to the council of the Priests.

RELIA. Know'st not the council hath adjourned to hear the case of Korihor?

SHIBLON. And Relia, thou art come to hear the scoffer tried? For shame—

RELIA. Nay, Shiblon, but from him to whom I am in ward—thy father, sir—I am come with message for thee.

SHIBLON. Nay, I would not chide thee, love; for am I not here as well?

RELIA. (*Suppressed anxiety.*) Corianton, where is he? Thy father bids thee find and keep him near thee.

SHIBLON. A special message from Korihor hath called him.

RELIA. Korihor? O Shiblon, let him not have speech with that bold, bad man.

SHIBLON. My love could not restrain him; tho' I shall seek him soon again.

(RELIA starts away. He takes her hand and detains her.)

Relia, dear, art yet decided on the day thou'lt be wife of Shiblon?

RELIA. Talk not of such here in the public hall.

SHIBLON. A son of Alma wooeth in the highway. Say to-morrow, or a fortnight hence; and we'll celebrate with jollity.

RELIA. Nay, nay, dear Shiblon, not so soon. Why haste the matter so?

SHIBLON. Why Relia, if dost love me, why procrastinate the day? Thou knowst well that never woman boasted greater love than Relia, plighted wife of Shiblon.

RELIA. Yes, yes, I know; I know; but Shiblon, dear, thou knowst just as well, it was my father's pledge; and Shiblon,—(*Looking him full in face.*) Think'st thou art loved as lovers should?

SHIBLON. I love *thee* more than mortal woman was ever loved before; and my heart doth answer: "Loved as well."

RELIA. I honor and respect, adore and praise; but more I cannot offer now.

SHIBLON. Thou dost not love me then?

RELIA. (*Troubled, pleads.*) O Shiblon, dear, kind, loving, the truest heart in God's great universe. How is it my heart doth not incline to thee? Why not delay till I can render thee my whole heart? (*Arms about his neck. Enter BASTOL from street; sees the situation.*)

BASTOL. Well, well, ha, ha! a fitting attitude, indeed, for this a public hall.

(*Break; RELIA blushes; SHIBLON vexed.*)

SHIBLON. Thy business mind; and keep close counsel, Jester.

BASTOL. I have no business, sir; and some dispute my claim to mind as well.

SHIBLON. Thou art not far from a fool.

BASTOL (*measuring toward SHIBLON*). True, about two measures, sir. (*RELIA laughs; SHIBLON angered.*)

SHIBLON (*recovering a smile*). Adieu, dear Relia; I must Corianton seek. (*Exit into prison yard, R.*)

BASTOL. Leave not on my account. I'll cast thee lots and if I lose, I will go and thou shalt stay (*SHIBLON is gone*). Shiblon, pious son of Alma, always preaching righteousness and finding few to listen.

RELIA. Thou speakest little praise of Shiblon.

BASTOL. My master, Corianton, wild and headlong; yet with this son the giddy ladies fall in love. He heeds them not; e'en less than his father's dry theology. Sentiment catches him as doth flattery a woman.

RELIA. As flattery doth *some* women.

BASTOL. In the heart this love is vaulted, guarded well by armed thought; but flattery in wisdom rationed is the key that opens the vault.

RELIA. And how of men?

BASTOL. Before the marriage vow is said, the man, unsought doth kneel; but when his baited fish is landed, the bride doth kneel—unsought by her.

RELIA. A prelude, self confessed, to thy union with rich Sarah, her of few years to live and endless money in her coffers.

BASTOL. Thou knowst Sarah then?

RELIA. Ay, the money keeper—

BASTOL. Yes, she kept mine; and then when ceased the inpouring stream, she cast me out; and he, old Reuben, a dried up, grumbling, boasting bear, she chose; but I shall be avenged. A warrior now am I; with "W" writ mighty. For a sword, my birthright I exchanged. With one fell swoop, I'll—*(Draws from a mammoth scabbard—one which drags the floor—a miniature sword; attitudes; RELIA laughs and catches his arm.)*

RELIA. Put up thy sword; the man is dead.

BASTOL. Ah, well, I'll follow not his corpse; for there may be some doubt as to which road he went. *(Pause—thoughtful.)*

RELIA. Why pausest thou?

BASTOL. I was just wondering if a man ever prospers who kills old people. *(Slowly puts up his sword.)* Why, Relia, I once saved his life; and when calm o'ercame his fright, he paid me but one senine, grudgingly. The copper held I to his gaze. On it, on him I gazed a spell—o'erpaid am I for such a job—and flung the coin at the miser's feet.

RELIA. Now thou'lt better suit thyself; for Sarah was to thee ill-mated. What qualities doth thy mind crave?

BASTOL. The bride of Bastol must be dark, yea, very dark; eyes like beedles; hair as raven's color; form not tall; nor short and bunt she; I can talk enough for twain—silent or slow her tongue must be.

RELIA. Ha, ha, ha, methinks, in Zarahemla thou'lt not find a bride of thy description.

BASTOL. My master, Corianton, findeth many of his description. I am his armor bearer, content to follow him—making merry as I go. Mayhap I'll count among dross, my silent tongued, my dark complexioned damsel that I seek.

CORANTON *(outside R. coming)*. The same bold Koriher he is, that once before was in our midst. *(CORANTON enters R. I E.)* What, Relia here; the thing I long have sought, to see thee while alone.

BASTOL. Well, am I nothing?

CORANTON. Thou Relia wouldst amuse thyself with Bastol and his wit.

BASTOL. "Amuse thyself"; and wit my only merit. Umph, I will tarry here no longer. *(Strikes out R.)*

RELIA. What wilt thou, Corianton?

CORANTON *(approaching her)*. Relia dear, I would tell thee that I love thee.

RELIA. Hush-h-h-h-h, say that word not again. Be thou my friend and brother.

CORANTON. I shall be neither friend nor brother, but confessed thy lover.

Providence designed me for thy shield—let me be thy protector.

RELIA *(hesitatingly)*. Yes, I owe thee my life, for 'twas thy skill and bravery that saved me from the wild beast's fury.

CORANTON. And dost yet recall—long years ago—a flower gathering party—

RELIA. How two little friends, tho' from the same bower, sought solitude together?

CORANTON. How he taunted her as she wove their garlands—

RELIA. And she drove him away—in tears.

CORANTON. He went away, but he returned—he found her—still in tears.

RELIA. A kind providence prompted that return. As he neared the cypress he left her by, a serpent uncoiled from a limb. It waved its head and darted its tongue—it held her in its spell. His tears were dried; he sped toward her side—but the serpent held her still. A moment more and 'twould coil her waist and crush her life away. He could not reach her side in time; what could the young man do? He drew from his quiver—

CORANTON. An arrow strong and pinioned that serpent's head to the tree!

RELIA. And he won her heart—he hath it yet—

CORANTON. Relia thou hast said! Tell me of thy love, the love of a willing heart. Be thou my bride as thou hast ever been my lover.

RELIA. Hush, Relia; thou hast o'ersaid it quite. *(to CORANTON.)* Our parents made another choice. "Honor and obey thy parents." Mine honor and my duty make me—another's.

CORANTON. Another's?

RELIA. Make me—Shiblon's.

CORANTON. Shiblon's?

RELIA. Honor and duty have been the guiding stars of my life—let us part.

CORANTON *(meditating)*. Thine honor and thy duty make thee Shiblon's.

RELIA. From childhood we have been selected—

CORANTON. Parent's choice—by you not ratified.

RELIA. Our parents too oft love for us. My father chose the pious son.

CORANTON. Thine explanation plain—mine unbelief. Yea, I am wild; throw off restraint; by the Priesthood, yet untamed. I must cope with mankind,

share their broils, make merry yet in innocence, and when this inclination is torpid with excess, 'tis time enough to long my face and pious be converted. (To her tenderly.) Thou art pure; as angels fair; thy soul transparent to the gaze. (Somewhat falteringly.) Relia dear, one question pray; dost thou love one; or is thy heart divided?

RELIA (*hangs her head.*) One only.

CORANTON (*joyously*). That one I know is Corianton then. (*Advances to embrace her. Restraining himself.*) Nay, Corianton, she is thy brother's plighted wife. Relia dear, thou lovest me; for thy heart speaks when thy lips would fain be mute. I could love thee much—but Shiblon, I resign to thee. (*They meet others gaze; then RELIA falls on his neck; pause—he tenderly unclasps her arms as he recovers himself.*) Nay, Corianton; thou must be loyal to thy brother. (*RELIA sighs. He leads her up to L. 3 E. Turns at exit; SHIBLON enters L. CORANTON with appropriate business resigns his place as RELIA'S escort to SHIBLON.*)

CORANTON (*to SHIBLON*). Take her Shiblon; (*to RELIA*) Go with Shiblon; his love—thy duty. Go. (*Exit SHIBLON and RELIA L. 3. RELIA exits she turns to CORANTON, holding toward him a flower, drops it; he picks it up, business, then slowly follows.*)

(SEANTUM and AMULOKI entering from prison yard in conversation. Rather suppressed dialogue.)

SEANTUM. I tell thee, Amuloki, keep ever before thee, the object of our Gadianton Order.

AMULOKI. Ay, the overthrow of the Nephite reign. Our oath is *anti-law, anti-church, anti-all, but gain*.

SEANTUM (*fearful*). Hush, but we must not act at this time. Korihor is bold enough and clever too, for all that should be said.

AMULOKI. Thou sayst well. Tonight we hold a meeting of our secret Gadianton Order.

SEANTUM. At the rendezvous?

AMULOKI. The same.

SEANTUM. The object.

AMULOKI. To count our swords that thou mayst know our strength.

SEANTUM. That in its proper season, but my thoughts are now of Korihor. He is a Zoramite, from mine own city.

AMULOKI. And thou hast come all the way from Antionum to the trial of thy friend?

SEANTUM. He is more than friend (*significantly*). To thee as well.

AMULOKI (*astonished*). What? a brother of our Gadianton Order?

SEANTUM. The same.

AMULOKI. Then he shall be free this day.

SEANTUM. Nay, we are not yet strong enough to take offensive action.

AMULOKI. We boast a legion sworn till death.

SEANTUM. 'Tis not enough. Bide my time. We'll count them not a legion but a host.

AMULOKI. Reckon not a host uncounted. The High Priest and his bevy make a mission to thy city.

SEANTUM. Their mission will come to naught.

AMULOKI. Be not too certain. His forceful son, the young and princely Corianton, is urged to join the mission.

SEANTUM. Better first convert the young and handsome Corianton. (*Both laugh.*)

AMULOKI. That is a kindred object of the mission.

SEANTUM. I pray thee Amuloki, give impetus to such a plan. It will aid me to nullify their mission.

AMULOKI. And what thy plan?

SEANTUM. Not perfect yet, argument, intrigue, force if need be. I shall kill that mission if I needs must slay the Priests.

AMULOKI. Silence, man (*looks fearfully about*). Let prudence guide. Let cunning be thy plan; not blood.

SEANTUM. Nay, grow not faint at one Priest's blood. A score or so must fall. Our secret oath commands.

AMULOKI. A fearful oath.

SEANTUM. Zarahemla must fall; our Gadianton Order triumph; but to conquer, we must wade in blood.

(CORANTON enters L. busy with flower.)

AMULOKI. Nay, Seantum, not so loud. (*Looks about fearful and sees CORANTON. Calls SEANTUM'S attention.*)

SEANTUM. What man is that?

AMULOKI. The High Priest's son in question. Thinkst thou he heard?

SEANTUM. Be it so; the man must die.

AMULOKI. I shall learn. (*Up to him.*) My noble friend, my Corianton. Lend now thine ear and heart for justice. (*Arm about him.*) Thou art troubled man. Come rouse thyself and know my friend Seantum. (*Leads him down.*) Let the best robed man in Zarahemla meet his only rival.

SEANTUM (*taking both his hands*). This is an honor to Seantum.

CORANTON. The honor is not thine but mine, to know so great a man.

SEANTUM (*to CORANTON*). 'Tis said thou art to join thy father's mission.



CORANTON. 'Tis rumor false. I cannot lead myself to teach till first I am full well convinced.

SEANTUM. I pray thee heed thy father's wish and be party to the mission. Thou'lt be a power 'mongst the young. Apostacy from faith is apostacy from law.

AMULOKI (*aside*). Priest and power to near one.

SEANTUM. I grant my views religious are as darkly thro' a glass; but our Banner of the Serpent is ever in my heart.

CORANTON. I am proud to know a prince so loyal.

SEANTUM. I pray thee join the mission. Be my guest in Antionum. Our cause is common for the Law if not for the Sanctuary.

CORANTON. Thy words take hold on me. They are kindred to my father's.

(*Cheers and laughter outside in the prison yard.*)

JASPER (*outside, coming*). Korihor is right.

LAMARCK (*outside, coming*). He can speak for himself.

ZENOS. Justice shall be done him.

ZENNOCK (*outside, coming*). The Judge will set him free.

JASPER (*entering R. with friend*). 'Tis best he should.

LAMARCK (*who has entered with JASPER*). So say I.

OMNES (*entering from yard, R.*) So say we all, etc., etc.

(*Two distant bugle calls.*)

JASPER. (*down L.*) The Chief Judge cometh with his High Priest shadow, ha, ha.  
(OMNES *laugh, derisive.*)

LAMARCK. This shadow is our judge in fact.

(*Deep peal of thunder nearer. Lightning flash. Two more trumpet calls.*)

All nature groans. The heavens weep for Korihor in his chains.

(*Chorus heard outside; coming nearer; singing. One nearer bugle call.*)

"JUSTICE HO."

AMULOKI. Hist!

JASPER (*bushes OMNES severely*). Canst hear, be silent.

AMULOKI (*pause; listen*). The Chief Judge cometh (*Leaves CORANTON—down to OMNES.*) His pageantry heralds his approach. We now must pause a spell the while a tinsilled, long drawn opening of court, impress us with the wisdom of the Chief Judge.

JASPER. The glory of Solomon in counterfeit.

AMULOKI. His wisdom too, in imitant.

JASPER. (*to OMNES.*) Come, doff; the heralds are at hand.

(*Storm increase. Pageantry entrance. Chorus which has been heard in the distance singing—*

"JUSTICE HO,"

*is now at hand. Enter in columns of twos—all carrying fern palms—winding their way down the stage amidst the pillars. As they near the thrones, columns separate, halt face and form an arch with their palms extended. High Priest Alma and Chief Judge Nephihah, followed by acolytes, pass under the arch between the lines and take their places on thrones. Chorus counter marches—rear passing under arch, palms at "carry"—and form rear as background to picture—all the while chanting.)*

"JUSTICE HO!"

(*pp. distant.*)

We come;

We come;

We come to herald the judgment seat  
For justice here below.

(*p. nearer.*)

The wicked prosper, a harvest reap;  
And virtue's triumph is slow.

(*Repeat forte as enter.*)

Ho for Justice;

Ho for Justice;

The man accused may state his case,  
Plead his cause;

No guile is his till proven base  
According to the laws.

Justice ho;

Justice ho;

Justice is a gift of God,  
An unknown path not often trod;  
May the accused be heard this day  
Have naught but truth to say;  
Have naught but truth to say.

(*Burning of incense, attitude as sing.*)

Lord we ask Thee lend Thine ear;  
Let Thy spirit linger near;  
Grant that ever word portend  
Toward justice; Amen; Amen.

(*Silence save a deep peal of thunder. BASTOL rushes in R. I E., shouting. Stumbles and falls.*)

BASTOL. The trial begins. Korihor cometh in his chains.

CORANTON (*as he is well on; rushes up; seizes BASTOL by the wrist firmly*). Thou fool; beshrew thy tongue.

(BASTOL, frightened, retires near door, L. 3. OMNES all R. and L. leaving C. vacant.

SEANTUM, AMULOKI and JASPER down L. CORANTON down R. All silent and expectant; weird music; MORIANTON enters with KORIHOR, confident, defiant in his chains. MORIANTON kneels, extends papyrus holder toward NEPHIAH. Judge takes the document, unrolls and scans it. Six SOLDIERS file in and form on either side the Altar down on stage level. KORIHOR surveys the throng and signs Gadianton order "Distress." JASPER and AMULOKI start to draw and rush to his aid.)

SEANTUM (*Staying JASPER, holding AMULOKI*). Nay, friends; peace and prudence.

AMULOKI. But he signs "Distress." Our oath, man, our oath!

SEANTUM. 'Twas but to count his friends; and see, he signs us once again; and this time "Peace" his signal.

(KORIHOR, smiling, has meanwhile signaled "Peace.")

MORIANTON. Most noble Chief Judge, I come from the Land of Gideon, to bring one Korihor, the Anti-Christ, who seeks to destroy religion; subvert all government—

KORIHOR (*loud and defiant, blasphemous*). Thou liest almost as well as a High Priest—

(OMNES approve; CORANTON noticeably vexed.)

KORIHOR. I seek but to root out of men's minds their false traditions concerning God and Christ, and make them free.

MORIANTON (*accustomed to these outbursts; Judge reads undisturbed*). I have brought Korihor from the land of Gideon, where he was tried—

KORIHOR. For his virtues.

(*Suppressed murmur of approval from OMNES.*)

MORIANTON. For his offenses; and the Chief Judge of Gideon hath sent him to the Chief Judge of the whole land.

KORIHOR. And God's High Priest. I pray thee do not leave that out.

(OMNES murmur approval and disapproval; sentiment pro and con. CORANTON nervously grasps sword.)

MORIANTON. Korihor is before thee and ready to answer. Take the prisoner, my task is finished.

(*Retires R., thunder increases; lightning visible at intervals.*)

NEPHIAH (*laying aside document—scanned*). Korihor, thou art charged by the authorities of Gideon with having sought to stir up sedition, disrupt the government, and destroy religion. It doeth appear, however, that thou has set

on foot no society to accomplish these unworthy purposes; thou has merely agitated them by thy speeches. The law hath no hold on thee. Our law cannot punish a man for his belief merely. Therefore, it is my decision that thou be set at liberty.

(OMNES suppressed murmurs of surprise; murmurs of satisfaction also.)

Let me remind thee, however, that our present system of government has been most fruitful of happiness to the people. Let me caution thee, also, that thy present path is full of danger. Thou art acquitted before the law of the land; but the High Priest may have some counsel for thee.

KORIHOR. (*Sneeringly*). Acquitted before the law of the land; now I suppose I am to be tried before the law of Heaven; well, we've heard from earth, now we're ready to hear from Heaven; what a pity it is the other place is not represented. (*Signifies downward, h—l.*) We should then have a trinity of thee to hear from. (*Folds arms.*) Well proceed, Heaven.

BASTOL. Will thou not see? Look to thyself, thou silly ass. (*Suppressed laughter—hushed.*)

ALMA. Korihor, thy speech ill becomes thine intelligence. Thy—

KORIHOR. What? Hath Heaven turn flatterer? Can a Priest speak to an opponent in fair, well-seeming words? (*Defiantly confident.*) Ah, sir Priest, thou knowest well to whom thou speakest; one who will not kneel in the dust at thy feet; one who fears neither thee nor thy Gods; but is free from thy slavish superstitions. Thou knowst this; else we should have had thunder from God's mouthpiece and not the mellifluous tones, breathing softly—(*in mockery*)—"Korihor, thy speech ill becomes thine intelligence."

(CORANTON nervous, angry. OMNES all pleased yet respectful, save those against KORIHOR. Thunder and lightning.)

ALMA. Think not I meant to flatter; for I meant to say, hadst thou listed closely, that thy speech would do credit to a perverse child. Korihor why dost thou go about to destroy this people's belief in God; and their hope in the Messiah which is to come?

KORIHOR. To undeceive them; to free them from a groveling superstition, lest they offend this traditionary God, a being who never has been seen, nor ever will be. I wish to strike off the servile chains with which ye priests have loaded them, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, and hold them at your mercy.

(OMNES murmurs of approval and disapproval quite apparent and well defined as to sides taken. CORANTON unable to restrain himself longer, draws his sword, and rushes at KORIHOR.)

CORANTON. This to my father. (*Recovering himself.*) Nay, nay, he is unarmed—

Korihor, beware! He is my father. (*Is pacified by friend.*)

KORIHOR. (*His back to CORANTON, does not see his action; continues after murmurs of OMNES subside.*) I would see men free!

ALMA. What man among this people is not free?

KORIHOR. I would tell them that intelligent management is Providence; genius is God; that this life so far as we know terminates existence.

ALMA. Destroy our hope beyond the grave, and what is life?

KORIHOR. Conjecture not the whence or whither; enough to know ye are.

ALMA. In every heart is found the question: "What is the great first cause?"

KORIHOR (*sneeringly*). And that excuse for priestly gain.

(CORANTON nervous, excited yet suppressed. Sighs. Friends surround him to pacify him.)

KORIHOR. I tell thee, proud Priest, now playing at humanity, thy religion is slavery; thy Priesthood a fraud; thy God a lie.

(OMNES surprised at his boldness; some ready to come to blows as to sides.)

ALMA. Could a deception, a lie, produce such supreme joy in the hearts of men as the faith of this people in God does?

KORIHOR (*sharply*). Yea, it could. The joy this people think they have is not joy. Man never tastes joy until he breaks away from all restraint.

ALMA (*rising and going down by Altar of Justice*). 'Tis a lying spirit prompts thee, Korihor. Thy statement is false that the priests glut themselves on the labors of the people. From the commencement of the reign of the Judges until now, I have labored with mine own hands for my support; and have never received one onti in my Priesthood calling. Korihor, thou mockest at religion; thou deniest a God; but I tell thee there is a God and wilt thou deny his existence, or blaspheme His name.

KORIHOR. Ay, that I will. What, thinkst thou because a High Priest says in solemn tones—(*mockery*) "I tell thee there is a God," that I will crouch at his feet and like an echo say—"Amen!" Give me thy proofs, sir Priest; thy proofs.

ALMA. All nature testifies of his existence; the traditions of our fathers—

KORIHOR (*sneering*). "The traditions of our fathers." I demand a living sign; and thou talkest to me of traditions.

ALMA. The testimony of our fathers from the beginning as recorded on the brass plates procured from Laban at Jerusalem.

KORIHOR (*sneeringly*). And what these plates from Laban had?

ALMA. A record of the Jews. They have written; we are writing, too; identical

in law—ours but another witness. All nature proclaims a creator. N'er yet hath lived a people without a God to worship; a sacred instinct prompts it, yet there stands a man who denies there is proof.

KORIHOR. And maintains it too. Show me thy proof; a living sign. Let me see a manifestation. Show me a sign.

ALMA. A sign? A miracle? O, fool, thou temptest God. Should all his creatures ask a sign, variety would groan for mercy. Look on the signs for landmarks given, written in the Scriptures.

KORIHOR (*triumphant*). Ha, ha, ha, ha, yea quibble Priest; the test hath come.

ALMA. Korihor, cease thy blasphemy. (*About, excited rage.*)

KORIHOR. These people go about bound down with yokes about their necks and dare not assert their rights for liberty and freedom; for no man can know that which is to come. Priest thou dost falsify.

CORANTON. Korihor, cease thine insults to my father! Another insult to him and I lay thee dead at my feet.

KORIHOR. Has the noble Corianton turned to God and religion?

CORANTON. It is not God, it is not religion; it is love for my father.

KORIHOR. Thou art thy father's son I see—

CORANTON. I am my father's son.

KORIHOR. So be it. Let the Priest show his power. (*To ALMA*) Ha, ha, ha, ha, where all thy boasted power to call the Gods for thy command? Ha, ha, ha, ha, make me a sign, a landmark bold, to write it in thy Scriptures!

CORANTON. Korihor! And this the man I have believed!

KORIHOR (*walks floor in triumph; derisive laughter and blasphemy*). Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. (*Rushes up steps; stops directly in front of ALMA—quick intense climax.*) I defy thee, Priest! (*Shakes both fists in ALMA's face.*)

ALMA (*extending hands heavenward*). Vengeance belongeth to God!

KORIHOR. I defy thee! I defy thy G—!

(CORANTON fights his way through mob and about to attack KORIHOR.)

(*Miracle—KORIHOR stricken dumb. All quickly and convincingly done. A mighty rushing wind outside; all becomes dark. Heavy clap of thunder—storm has been gathering strength with scene; a streak of lightning bursts from Heaven. Falls on KORIHOR alone—light remains, KORIHOR only one on stage seen; falls to floor in circle of light, rolls down steps. Expressions of surprise; wonder, etc.; efforts at speech. Mighty contortions of features; pleading attitude to Priest, who is invisible. Signify by bus. that he is dumb.*)

ALMA (*extends his hand within circle of light—hand marked by noticeable jewel that it will be recognized*).

THY SIGN HATH COME!  
THY GOD HATH ANSWERED THEE!

(Collapse of KORIHOR.)

(CORIANTON in Picture—Conversion.)

PICTURE.

(Nothing seen on stage but CORIANTON, KORIHOR, and the hand and face of the HIGH PRIEST.)

CORIANTON. Father, let me join the mission!

CURTAIN.

[NOTE.—This climax must be worked in a way that will give it varied interpretations, e.g.: Corianton accepted it as a new wrought miracle; Seantum later called it "lightning struck." Zoan terms it "by sorcery stricken dumb."]

END OF ACT I.

## The Ambiguities of Belief

SARAH E. JENKINS

Reviews of Javen Tanner's *Curses for Your Sake* (Mormon Artists Group, 2006) and Mary Karr's *Sinners Welcome* (HarperCollins, 2006)

We never see the angel coming,  
just percussive agitation on the pond,  
pockmarks without rainfall,  
or stuttered wakes shouldering the air.

—From "Two for Samuel Beckett: Bethesda" by Javen Tanner

AT THE EDGE OF THE POOL at Bethesda, the poet holds vigil with the blind and the lame, waiting for an angel to disturb the water. As they watch for the slightest change in the water, he wonders,

And how much does the angel notice?

He has his work:

stir the surface, ascend.

We don't doubt he knows the purpose—

some relieved, others afflicted.

And we don't deny

there is security in suffering,

always knowing what and where,

waiting for the troubling of the water.

The story of Bethesda—the waiting, the angel, the suffering, the hope—becomes the master narrative for Javen Tanner's collection *Curses for Your Sake*. He details not only those currently waiting by the pool, but also the man Jesus healed, blending the image of the rising man with that of "thighs stung by urine, / flies coating a smear / of pus and blood on stone." There is at once healing and pain, accompanied by the satisfaction of understanding one's pain, if nothing else. And there is the hovering question of what new pain the healing will bring.

At first glance, the subjects of Tanner's poems seem familiar, from the biblical Bethesda and Eden to literary Yorick and Chekhov to contemporary San Diego and Manhattan, but familiarity is quickly set aside in favor of the unfamiliar and unexpected. The lines spoken by Eve in Tanner's "Eden," for example, are immediately reinterpreted:

She said, "Meet me in the garden."

I took this to mean,

Come with me  
and we will be buried in water,  
fire, nomenclature, earth.

The impulse to delve deeper into Eve's words, to expand them, gives the reader access to the voice and mind of the speaker—someone who, like Tanner, won't settle for what is on the surface. This demanding curiosity proves necessary when Tanner employs strong, straightforward statements such as "Doom is easy for us" in "Manhattan" or when his imagery becomes the flame of "burning / Rembrandts and Caravaggios, / or peeling back the skins of Rothkos // to touch the smoldering matter" in "San Diego." Both statement and image could easily be left hanging, but Tanner's readers can trust he will continue to delve, to create connections not immediately seen. The end result may not be comfortable, but it is satisfying, as in "I Imagine My Parents as Characters in Chekhov": "They should kiss our wounds. / They should fend off the darkness / with lullabies too heavy for the tongue." Here it is the parents claiming the children's attentions, an effective role reversal, particularly in Tanner's world where words are ever evolving, until, in the final lines of the final poem, "Sudden Music," the reader is directed to "Listen to the muffled voices above. / They sing, 'Please, please,' but from here it sounds like 'peace.'"

If Tanner's voice is mutable, flexible, we need to look in the opposite direction for a way to describe Mary Karr's voice in her most recent collection, *Sinners Welcome*. This disparity in voice, however, does not push the two poets to the extreme ends of some imagined spectrum; it allows them to approach the ambiguities of belief from their own perspectives, with their own styles—while Tanner explores the thin line between being blessed and being cursed, Karr refuses to acknowledge the line between sinner and saint. Instead, she gathers her subjects under the confident banner *Sinners Welcome* to join Czeslaw Milosz in pleading, "Hear me, Lord, for I am a sinner, which means I have nothing except prayer" ("Hear Me," *Second Space*). Her poems, startling at times with their straightforwardness, become prayers of one inquiring after

faith, from the speaker whose "skull / was a hard helmet I wore to pray / with my middle finger aimed at the light fixture" to Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, "grieving on his rock under the olive trees."

The poems that follow the life of Christ from birth to resurrection form the religious and narrative backbone for the collection—not just as a unified storyline, but as some of the most compelling individual poems. Each title begins with "Descending Theology" and Karr leans on the many possible definitions of *descending* to explore events that identify Christ as both God and man. Images and language from these poems spill over into the rest of the collection, including the narrative of Karr's conversion to Catholicism:

God first formed me in the womb

small as a bite of burger.

Once my lungs were done

He sailed a soul like a lit arrow

to inflame me. Maybe that piercing

made me howl at birth . . .

Eventually, I lurched out to kiss the wrong mouths,

get stewed, and sulk around. Christ always stood  
to one side with a glass of water.

I swatted the sap away.

When my thirst got great enough

to ask, a stream welled up inside . . .

Karr moves from Christ's story to her story to a dozen others' stories, creating a sense of faith that is anything but the blind leading the blind. While there are some poems that initially read extreme ("Hypertrophied Football Star as Serial Killer," "Hurt Hospital's Best Suicide Jokes," or "Miss Flame, Apartment Bound, as Undiscovered Porn Star") with equally extreme language, for the most part they serve to illustrate why it is necessary to "descend theology" and there meet Christ. Perhaps this is best shown in "Delinquent Missive," in which Karr details the fall of David Ricardo who "stabbed his daddy / sixteen times with a fork." "Maybe by now you're ectoplasm," she speculates, "or the zillionth winner of the Texas / death penalty sweepstakes." But she also hopes for him that

some organism drew your care—orchid

or cockroach even, some inmate

in a wheelchair whose steak you had to cut

since he lacked hands.  
In this way, the unbudgeable stone  
that plugged the tomb hole  
in your chest could roll back, and in your sad  
slit eyes could blaze  
that star adored by its maker.

In an afterword to her collection (which originally appeared as an essay in *Poetry*), Karr writes, "That's why I pray and poetize: to be able to see my brothers and sisters despite my own (often petty) agonies, to partake of the majesty that's every sinner's birthright." Here she refers to another poem of Milosz, quoting: "I was not separated from people, grief and pity joined us" ("Late Ripeness"). In *Sinners Welcome*, Karr joins people, including Christ, giving her reader the opportunity to participate in His majesty, even if it is with some melancholy:

And I worry the form I'll finally take (death  
lesson) and whether I can be made to leave  
on anyone some mark worth bearing.

## The Book of Voyeurism

ELLEN FAGG

A review of Salt Lake Acting Company's *Saturday's Voyeur* (2006)

### CHAPTER I

*In which the narrator, herself a Mormon-reared theatre critic, hiding behind the editorial We, considers the creation of the dramatic event known as Saturday's Voyeur. And raises the question of Us and Them, and how making fun of Mormons, even if it's funny, is simplistic.*

Because this is a Salt Lake City story and thus, a story about religion, the place to begin is with the creation myth of Salt Lake Acting Company's trademark *Saturday's Voyeur*.

In the Beginning, a Catholic, a Jew, and a Mormon, a godhead of theatre types, walked into the basement of a Unitarian Church and proclaimed: Let there be a play. And let this play be a musical satire that strip mines the mother lode of Mormon culture.

This was in 1978, the era that begat *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and on a separate cultural track, *Saturday's Warrior*, the most popular Mormon play of all time, a treacly story of predestination and celestial love during the Saturday night of the last dispensation of time.

The first *Voyeur* was such a shoestring affair that audience members heard about it via wedding announcements sent to the small subscriber list of the fledgling Salt Lake Acting Company (SLAC). The comedy starred Father LaNoir and his amply endowed, beehive hairdo-adorned wife, Mother Elthora, and in its first dozen editions, the campy musical parody was made out of topical jokes hung on a frame story about the family. *Voyeur* spoofed a wide-ranging list of religious and cultural traditions, including the oddball combined names of Utah natives, rural speech patterns mixed with the niceness of religiosity, Family Home Evenings, testimony meetings, sexually naive missionaries, abstinence (or not), plus curious food preferences, such as all-you-can-eat buffets, fry sauce, cheesy funeral potatoes, and green Jell-O salads. Over the years, the show's hit list of song parodies included irreverences such as "There's No

Erection in the Resurrection," "The Momos and the Homos Can't Be Friends," and "Salt Lake, Salt Lake," which always sparked cheers from the audience with this line: "If I can live out here, I can live anywhere."

In 1990, it came to pass that one of the show's original writers, Nancy Borgenicht, paired up with actor Allen Nevins, and the local fable about a provincial Mormon family began a new kind of comedy, one increasingly fueled by political takeoffs of local news events. And while *Voyeur* was transformed into a completely original musical, based on a fresh crop of headlines and news bits each year, it remained rooted in the cultural traditions of a young American religion: the original comedic road show performed in the ward gym known by the highfalutin name of "cultural hall."

As Borgenicht said in 2003 on the occasion of the show's 25th anniversary, "It used to be about 'Them.' Now it's about 'Us' and 'Them.'"

## CHAPTER II

*In which we introduce the concept of a bifurcated culture and explore the paradox of humor that's considered both harsh and culturally therapeutic.*

Us and Them. (Mormons and Non-Mormons. Or Mormons and All the Rest of Us. Or All of Us and Those Damn Mormons.) To understand why *Voyeur* has become not just a campy local spoof but a theatrical phenomenon, you have to consider the fact that Utahns are divided by the Zion Curtain, which serves as a metaphorical divide of a bifurcated culture. That's the divide where *Voyeur* is rooted and thrives, a full-length play sprouting up each year to offer a fresh cultural litmus test. If you think it's funny, that means you're probably a member of the pissed-off minority. If you don't think it's funny, that means you're probably tired of the endless cultural jabs against mainstream culture, tired of the endlessly pissed-off.

During an era when our country's culture became increasingly homogenized, *Voyeur* evolved into one of Salt Lake City's most distinctive, and most ambitious, local institutions. From its underground beginnings in that Unitarian Church basement, the musical now plays as the theatre company's centerpiece and its cash cow, albeit an irreverent one. And it plays in SLAC's home, ironically, a funky, historic former Mormon meetinghouse turned theater.

And at its most basic, *Voyeur* is a story about Us, a genre that theatre producers say audiences are hungry for, and yet its topical humor is so locally rooted it's quickly perishable. There's simply no way to franchise the comedy and take it to other cities, no way to earn bigger audiences and national attention for the quality of its humor. At most, the show has an eleven-week shelf life in Utah, a

state that remains off the beaten track of the country's theatre world.

And because this is a Salt Lake City story, people usually judge the play as funny or not based on their religious background. "Harsh" is how one *Voyeur* virgin described the humor of the 2006 edition. Considering the fact that many of the script's cultural riffs, such as references to missionary flip charts, seem anachronistic, a decade or two out of date, it's safe to assume that church-going Mormons, even those with well-developed senses of humor, aren't the intended audience and are no longer, apparently, part of its creation.

Yet supporters claim the show's greatest value is that it serves as a cultural escape valve, a temple of free speech in a conservative town. Politically correct *Voyeur* is not—which is exactly its virtue, fans say. Ticket holders term the annual event "cultural therapy," an experience admittedly leavened by the rare opportunity, during a theatrical performance, to picnic on fruit and cheese and get lubricated on wine.

During rehearsals for the 2006 show, Borgenicht rhapsodized about the eternally cute nature of young Mormon elders, while waving a forty-item list of recent news bits and themes shoehorned into this year's script. "We write about what we've all been through together," she said, describing *Voyeur* as an alternative account of recent history, part living newspaper, part local news. Local news, that is, as told through the filter of one theatre company. "We do the hypocrisy," Borgenicht said. "We do the lie."

And all of this cultural weight makes it difficult to evaluate whether the annual show is actually, successfully, funny.

## CHAPTER III

*In which the issue of dismal sales for a nationally focused edition of Voyeur sparks the question: Has the play lost its funny bone?*

For most of the show's twenty-eight-year history, *Voyeur* appeared reliably critic-proof, serving as the comedy bible of local culture, a guaranteed success with liberal theatergoers. Until, that is, the hard-hitting 2005 edition, which unfolded a darker and preachier story than fans expected, with cover versions of harsh hip hop and rap songs taking on national issues. Some patrons felt betrayed, walking out in the middle of the show, later sending the company protest letters and emails. Attendance dipped thirty-five percent, from 14,000 tickets sold over eleven weeks to just 10,000.

SLAC producers say they got the message: theatergoers want to laugh at local stories about local politicians. Or as one *Voyeur* veteran explained: "They've created ownership for the community, which makes it very successful, but that



means the community feels like they want to have a say."

To have a say, though, in what? Summarizing the densely layered satire of *Voyeur* is akin to explaining any other successful joke, yet an outline of high points provides a Cliffs Notes overview of its comedy. For the 2006 edition, the border town of Wendover serves as a metaphorical backdrop, highlighting a place divided by state lines, laws, and religious sensibilities, where everyone—Mormons, Catholic sisters, and Baptists alike—works for the Pink Garter Casino. The story revolves around Enola Gay, a business-minded Madame with a secret past (she was once a Mormon), who threatens to build a "bunny temple" on the airport property she owns. Town leaders want to turn the land into a natural-family-oriented water park. Or maybe a desert aquarium.

Complicating everything is Paul Gentilee, a speculator representing Las Vegas interests, who's on a mission to buy Gay's property when he runs into an opportunistic mission president and his self-righteous wife. And because this is *Voyeur*, hilarity ensues when Katrina, Enola Gay's nubile adopted daughter, falls in love with a nubile young missionary who's avoiding his gay companion.

Among the cover songs are "These Boobs Are Made for Walkin'" ("These Boots Are Made for Walkin'") and "The Family Man Can," ("The Candy Man"), while things get really absurd in "Come on In" ("Here You Come Again"), where Katrina sings: "I'd like to whip your flame / I'm like some hurricane / So hold on tight / While I burst my levee." Finally, in an over-the-top grand finale, the entire crew performs a striptease to appease a crazed casino audience of Deer Weekend Widows to the country tune of "Save a Horse (Ride a Mormon!)."

#### CHAPTER IV

*In which the narrator, who is me, briefly nods at her complicated relationship with Utah and considers the cultural divide before donning her critical hat to offer a bifurcated review of Voyeur, circa 2006.*

Like most of the writers I know with Utah connections, I bring my own complicated relationship with local culture and my Mormon upbringing to the stories I write as the theatre critic for the *Salt Lake Tribune*. After a decade of writing and editing in New York City and Los Angeles and my hometown of Portland, Oregon, it has been fascinating to catch up with all the developments in Salt Lake City since I left town in 1994. And I assumed these changes would be reflected in recent *Voyeurs*.

Besides all the Olympic plazas and parks dotting Wasatch Front towns, one sign of a cultural shift is the cheeky tone of "The Missionary Position," a column published regularly in Salt Lake's alternative newspaper, the *City Weekly*.

What sets the column apart is the variety of faces pictured week after week, a mash-up of upright-looking business types and tattooed denizens, some still appearing very churchy, others clearly no longer affiliated with any kind of institution, each answering a question about their past experience as missionaries and, in the process, serving to explode stereotypes about who Mormons, or former Mormons, are. The first time I read the column, I considered its counterintuitive take as a sign of a shift toward a more complicated brand of public truth-telling in Utah culture, appreciating the way it challenges and yet respects the demographic oddity of missionary experience. The column's very knowingness helps it to speak to both camps, the Us and the Them, among the newspaper's readership.

And yet. Every time I receive a press release from a local theatre company proclaiming a work with gay themes as "edgy" or from a community theatre troupe boasting about another production of *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat*, a safe, non-offensive musical that serves as the green Jell-O of Utah theatre, I feel weary all over again. Both kinds of notices remind me that I've reentered the time warp of living in Utah, a culturally divided town, and I realize, once again, just how little things have changed.

I took all of this cultural weariness with me to review *Voyeur* last summer, enlisting fellow arts critic Brandon Griggs to provide context on all the editions I had missed. We disagreed about the success of the show's ending but agreed this year's edition wouldn't disappoint regular viewers, as it offered plenty of funny lines and musical bombast: a throwback to the *Voyeur* franchise that's just naughty enough and funny enough to puff up liberal pride and rough up red-state sensibilities.

It's not a play I'd recommend to the more conservative theatergoers I know, yet its jabs seemed clichéd and obvious, expected, even, rather than mean-spirited. I was surprised to be once again watching a story featuring a horny Mormon missionary and his closeted gay companion. Change a few details and I could have been watching the same story back in 1994.

#### CHAPTER V

*In an apparent digression, we ponder New Yorker writer Joan Acocella's argument about identity in her October 3, 2005, review of Zadie Smith's novel On Beauty. And pause to consider what it would be like to read and watch stories where Mormons are allowed the same privilege of texture as Jews or blacks.*

Joan Acocella writes, "But, while the plot is a wreck, many of the episodes it engenders are not. They do what the realistic novel is supposed to do—hold

up a mirror to its time. . . . What interests me most, however, are the scenes about race, and . . . the extent to which Smith has made them rich and complicated. . . . She is especially well positioned for this project, not merely by being mixed-race but by being young, and thus having grown up—unthinking at first, taking what she saw just as life—in the ethnic stew that came together only in the past few decades. This means that she can talk about that world without self-consciousness and without fear of seeming racist. Such license may be an extraliterary virtue, but, when it comes to novels about race, I'll take my virtues where I can get them. Smith, with her predecessors, could help do for blacks what Saul Bellow, fifty years ago, did for Jews; that is, make them normal subjects for the novel, no longer people who have a sign over their heads saying 'Jew' or 'Black' but regular people, with the same privilege of texture—of self-contradiction and error, and thus of tragic force—as white people."

## CHAPTER VI

*In which we wind to a conclusion by posing questions about what it would take to reinvent this cultural escape valve and, because this is a Salt Lake City story, boiling everything down to another consideration of the essential question of Us and Them.*

And so the question becomes: This far into the media-proclaimed Age of Irony, when theatergoers are as likely to get their news from the stylish satire of Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* as they are from listening to the straightforward delivery of network anchor Brian Williams, do we still need an old-fashioned musical comedy to help us examine our "Us and Them" divide with fresh eyes? Now that *Saturday's Voyeur* has grown up, going on twenty-nine years old, is the satire played out?

One way to challenge *Voyeur* would be to question its religious bigotry, the way the musical comedy simplistically labels its characters with signs over their heads, not "Jews" or "Blacks," but "Mormons." If we've learned anything from identity politics, it's the difference between minority outsiders making jabs at the dominant majority and insiders and outsiders banding together to tell jokes that spear and include all of us. So many humorous darts have been thrown at Mormon culture in the *Voyeur* years that it seems difficult to find fresh space on the target. Or to quote from our review of last year's *Voyeur*: "It treads familiar ground instead of digging deeply enough to plow new satirical furrows."

And yet. Setting aside questions of political correctness, perhaps there's a more basic, more interesting way to break ground and reinvigorate this cultural institution. Imagine what it would look like if Mormons were invited back into the fold of *Voyeur's* creation. Consider if Utah culture were stirred with the vigor of a Zadie Smith postcolonial novel, creating a comedy stew that allows

Mormons to be portrayed with all the depth of self-contradiction, all the rich messiness of texture, as the non-churched. Isn't there fresh humor to be mined from that kind of cultural friction? Would that allow the theatre company to reach across the cultural divide to invite every variation of nonbelievers and believers and those who never did to mingle in its seats?

Simplistic, perhaps, even beyond obvious, but just like blacks and Jews, as a people Mormons are complicated. And because this is a Salt Lake City story, maybe it's as simple as a reconsideration of the question of Us and Them, of how the divide that separates us can also serve to bind us together, if both camps are invited to laugh at the jokes.

## Understandest Thou Me?

NAN PARKINSON MCCULLOCH

### Reviews of

- Matters of the Heart* by Thom Duncan (a reading of the play), produced by the Nauvoo Theatrical Society (NTS), September 2006, directed by Scott Bronson
- Dial Tones* by J. Scott Bronson, produced by NTS, Orem, Utah, September 2006, directed by the author
- The Reluctant Convert* by Mahonri Stewart (a reading of the play) at Utah Valley State College, Orem, Utah, Fall 2006
- Confessions of a Mormon Boy* by Steven Fales, produced by Mormon Boy Productions, Salt Lake City, Utah, November 2006, directed by Jack Hofsiss

THE HUMAN NEED FOR LOVE is so strong that some psychologists believe even perversions stem from pursuing it. How imperative, then, is our need to be understood? Could it be the driving force behind every artist? How useful is it to dissect a work based primarily on how it enables characters, and authors, to reveal themselves to others? In four plays recently produced along the Wasatch Front, the force that propels the action and development of character seems to be the impulse to be understood, at various personal costs.

Thom Duncan's play *Matters of the Heart* is a classic case of a father and a son begging to be understood by each other. Robert and Alice Baines don't know why their son Paul is returning home a year early from his mission in France, and Duncan uses Richard Poll's Iron Rod/Liahona dichotomy from his 1967 *Dialogue* essay to characterize the two men. Taken from the Book of Mormon, the iron rod symbolizes "the word of God" in Lehi's epic dream, a rod that leads through a disorienting fog to the tree of life and is abandoned at the peril of the soul. The Liahona refers to a more ambiguous and flexible guide, a kind of compass given to Lehi to direct his clan successfully through the wilderness.

Robert, a kind, devoted stake president, finds safety "following the brethren" in his unwavering, stalwart iron-rod way, while his son, a Liahona, finds value in thinking outside the box. Paul is sensitive, thoughtful, and intelligent, but

when his youthful idealism and borrowed testimony are challenged, he is left questioning and insecure. When he finally finds the courage to tell his parents why he left France early, it is clear that Robert cannot accept Paul's decision. Were his son's reasons for coming home related to incompetence or indiscretion, Robert could have understood, but the reasons are far more complicated. It seems that Paul asked for inspiration before making this critical decision to return early and feels that the decision was confirmed by the Spirit. Robert infers Paul's inspiration may have come from another source (the devil) because part of holding fast to the iron rod means the Spirit and the prophets would never lead one astray. As a Liahona, Paul is convinced we are all flawed, and that even the prophets can make mistakes. He believes the gospel is true, but he isn't so sure about the Church.

At a certain point in the drama, Robert tries to force Paul to pray with him, but Paul is outraged by what he considers intimidation and manipulation. Paul leaves in anger and Robert takes a phone call saying, "It's okay, I wasn't doing anything important." Perhaps justifiably, Paul feels his relationship with his father is unsalvageable.

As useful as the dichotomy of rods and compasses is in the play, it is Alice, the long-suffering wife and mother, who seems to transcend the two poles and thus proves to be the most interesting voice in the play. Mediating her voice is one of reason. She reminds Paul that God made both the iron rod and the Liahona, and that both are cherished as each is needed to further God's plan. Sadly, I am not sure Alice feels cherished or understood herself in the play. A closet doubter, she shows no signs of coming out. She understands both Paul and Robert and loves them fully in spite of their flaws, but she is not sure she will still be loved if her self-perceived weakness is revealed. Alice feels the burden of being a good member of the Church and the wife of the stake president. She is fixed on "setting the example," even, it seems, if it means denying her true self to those closest to her.

How many of us are like Alice and need permission to express our true feelings? *Matters of the Heart* is an insightful play with universal appeal. It intriguingly revisits of Poll's ideology from the 1960s body of Mormon thought, but is ultimately a revisiting that asks for a third option, accented by the need for honest self-disclosure. The paradigm for this option would be the ability to understand and accept both Liahonas and Iron Rods.

While Duncan's mediator is a mother and wife, in J. Scott Bronson's *Dial Tones*, the equivalent is an inanimate object, a telephone, or to be more exact, artificial intelligence (AI), that wants to understand humans. Bronson's play is

also more comic than *Matters of the Heart*. AI becomes self-aware and designs to bring a boy and a girl together to study them, to explore their feelings and emotions, and hopefully, to experience passion through them. It starts with AI playing a practical joke, ringing the wrong number and connecting the two. The telephone keeps ringing the wrong number until Kelly and Hazel start a dialogue and begin to get to know each other. Soon a friendship evolves and each comes to depend on the other for support. From the beginning they vow they will never meet in person because to meet would destroy the mystique of their relationship. Though sorely tempted to meet in person, they doggedly hold to the agreement.

Using the fantastical device in the personification of AI, *Dial Tones* successfully explores the human issues that seem to arise in most relationships. Kelly and Hazel lead separate lives and even date other people, but they keep the telephone relationship going for three years. AI is also concerned that if the two should meet, it will all be over, and AI will no longer be an important part of their lives. AI comes to care for Kelly and Hazel far more than it thought possible. The two friends struggle to reveal themselves to each other in a search for understanding. They live through their voices with few distractions, and the telephone therapy helps them discover their own feelings as they "talked, argued, lied, cried, screamed, and dreamed." The beautiful thing about their relationship is the freedom to say anything they want to each other. When Hazel admits to Kelly she has a serious problem and a major decision to make, we discover the difference between being in love and loving. It takes some time to get to this point, but the relationship changes from "talking the talk" to "walking the walk."

Most of us have probably long given up on the idea of universal understanding and will settle for being understood by one person. Kelly and Hazel find that one person in each other. As the telephone says, "There are other ways to touch someone." *Dial Tones* certainly touched me.

The barriers to understanding one another in Mahonri Stewart's play *The Reluctant Convert* stem more from emotional and psychological distance than from the artificial construction of a relationship across telephone lines. In *Convert* famous British author C. S. Lewis (Jack) is in the World War I Officer Training Corps but spends his spare time with his friend Paddy and Paddy's family to avoid his own family. Jack's relationship with his father is hopelessly deadlocked. Jack's mother died when he was a child, and his family fell apart. Albert, his father, was so distraught he sent his sons to boarding school and built an emotional shell around himself, which neither Jack nor his brother,

Warnie, could penetrate. This strained relationship continued into adulthood and, according to the play, caused Warnie to take up drinking.

Paddy has a premonition he will not survive the war and convinces Jack that if one of them does not make it, the survivor will take care of the other's family. Thankfully, Jack is very fond of Paddy's mother, Janie, and his sister, Maureen.

Although he is unable to show it, Albert loves his son. He supports Jack and has made it possible for him to acquire a first-rate education. What is love, though, without understanding? When Paddy is killed in the war, Jack keeps his promise and moves in with Janie and Maureen. The fact that Jack spends all his time with his new family is a source of great pain to Albert, who is still supporting Jack financially. He simply does not understand how Jack can do this or why he would do it.

Stewart is a master writer of rich dialogue, clever and scintillating in the style of Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw. This is a very good play, befitting a fascinating, worthy protagonist in the historical character of C. S. Lewis, whose thoughtful writing on Christian themes includes *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. True to the play's title, however, Jack does not turn to belief easily. An atheist, Jack nevertheless has a propensity for making Christian friends. Since childhood he has been searching for something but cannot define his search. While attending Oxford, Jack meets many prominent friends who try to influence him toward God and religion, including author J. R. R. Tolkien, who plays an important role in Jack's spiritual progress. And yet, despite his progress, nothing Jack accomplishes seems to close the gap between his father and him until Albert becomes ill.

Through loving service to his father, Jack begins to know Albert, and his father comes to know him. As the two reach mutual understanding, the wall between them comes down and their hearts are, in the language of scripture, softened. When Jack discovers his father has cancer, he rededicates himself to caring for Albert, and they develop a beautiful bond. Only when his father dies does Jack receive clarity regarding God and religion.

One might think lessons learned are too late for Jack, but not so in this case. For had it not been for his service to his father, he would not have "found" his father or Christ. Though much time has been lost between father and son, understanding makes up in depth for what it lacks in length.

Compared to the *The Reluctant Convert's* relatively quiet self-disclosure, Steven Fales's autobiographical one-man play, *Confessions of a Mormon Boy*, is a bonanza of self-revelation. Fales's account of his remarkable journey toward self-understanding is fraught with humor and tragedy and is moving, engaging,

and thought-provoking. His well-written story begins with flashbacks to his childhood as a precocious, sensitive child singing his own songs. Fales, a sixth-generation Mormon, was a Boy Scout, attended seminary, served a mission, and went to BYU, where he was a Young Ambassador. He received a BFA in music from Boston Conservatory and an MFA in acting from the University of Connecticut.

While Fales had known for some time that he was gay, he had had only one gay experience at the time he started dating Emily Pearson, the daughter of LDS poet Carol Lynn Pearson, author of *Goodbye, I Love You*, an account of her marriage to a homosexual man and his death from HIV-AIDS in the '80s. Fales explains that he didn't want to be gay; he desperately wanted to marry in the temple and have a family.

It seemed like cruel irony when the two fell in love, and they chose not to tell Emily's mother that Fales was gay. Agonizing over their decision to marry, they turned to a new reparative therapy, believing that together, with God's help, they could fix the problem. It seems that no stone was left unturned in Fales's attempt to change his same-sex attraction.

After a painful seven years of marriage and two children, Fales and his wife divorced and Fales went to see his bishop, who sent him on to the stake president. When Fales entered the office, the stake president didn't even know Fales's name. Fales was crushed, reminded as he was of other painful times in his life when he felt invisible. He couldn't understand how it was that he was being tried for a crime that the Church didn't admit existed, claiming that "homosexual" was an adjective (as in "homosexual tendencies"), never a noun, which suggests a state of being. During his Church court for excommunication, Fales was in the depths of despair, feeling guilty and unworthy of God's love. During the long formal pronouncement of the verdict, he closed his eyes and sat quietly. As the words from the court receded, he had a spiritual experience. A voice said to him, "I know who you are . . ."

After losing his church community and becoming estranged from many of those close to him, Fales plunged into his "gay adolescent" period and tried very hard to fit in as an escort in New York City. He was deeply in debt and wanted to pay child support. He liked the money he could earn as an escort but started drinking and taking drugs and soon hit rock bottom. By this time he had assumed a victim's mentality and blamed others for his problems. He then had a second spiritual experience, which bound him forever to his family. This experience, along with some effective therapy, helped him to accept personal responsibility for his life and his choices. He began a life-affirming journey

seeking self-understanding, then self-acceptance. Writing and performing this play about his life has been part of that journey. At the end of the play Fales bares his soul and forces us to take him seriously by performing a simple self-revealing act. A stunning moment.

Steven Fales is a gifted writer, musician, and performer. Oh yes, and he is also a devoted father as well as a homosexual, not just an adjective, and no longer invisible.

As a middle child in a large family, I have always longed to be understood. There are a number of people who love me, but the ones who understand me make up the short list. So which comes first, love or understanding? We can apply Steven Fales's epiphany to all of us. God surely does know who we are. Could it be, then, that artists (and maybe all humans) are driven to communicate who we are, what we are, and why we are, yet want to be loved as we are? Because of others' rejection, and perhaps even worse, their indifference, many of us gravitate to God, who understands us and loves us anyway.

## A Video Postcard from New York

BEN UNGUREN

A review of *Sisterz in Zion* (2006, directed by Melissa Puente)

IN WHAT WOULD BECOME the last interview he gave, John Grierson—father of documentary film in Canada and the U. S.—recalls the words of filmmaker Cesare Zavattini:

[Zavattini] thought it would be wonderful if all the villages in Italy were armed with cameras so that they could make films by themselves and write film letters to each other, and it was all supposed to be a great joke. I was the person who didn't laugh, because I think that is the next stage . . . the local film people making film letters and sending them to each other.<sup>1</sup>

Grierson's idea—that documentary films of the future would act as *conversations* between small groups in different locations and of different cultures—still awaits its fulfillment, at least in Mormon circles. Melissa Puente's film *Sisterz in Zion*, however, takes Mormon documentary a step in that direction.

That the film represents a small group of Mormons instead of the entire Church can be seen in its conception. In 2003, dozens of young women from the New York New York Stake organized an excursion to an Especially for Youth (EFY) camp at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Private donations were acquired to cover travel expenses, and the trip was unusual enough that EFY waived the girls' tuition fee. Puente was one of the Young Women leaders. A former BYU film student, she decided to bring along a video camera and make something for the stake to watch afterward.

After filming the girls' journey, Puente realized she might have a film that warranted distribution outside her stake. The project took a few years, but with the collaboration of filmmakers at BYU, interviews were conducted not only with the New York girls but with their old EFY counselors, roommates, and Young Women leaders. In the end, Puente—who has edited reality programs for television—created a slice of Mormon reality television.

*Sisterz in Zion* features only a handful of the twenty-four girls who attended

1. Quoted in Sussez.

the EFY conference. Puente's film is most concerned with a subset of the girls who are (1) converts to the Church and (2) not Caucasian. Their backgrounds provide an ideal contrast to the Western whiteness that—the film reveals—pervades the Especially for Youth programs.

The film begins in New York, where a rap-style instrumental of "Come, Come, Ye Saints" accompanies the girls as they travel, usually alone, to early-morning seminary or high school, either by bus or subway or on foot. Each girl tells a little about herself. One goes to church by herself every Sunday. Another keeps to herself at school in order to avoid problems with her non-Mormon peers. Their Young Women leaders describe the drug-infested terrain that some of the girls have to traverse to get to church. As the girls assemble to recite the Young Women's motto ("We are daughters of a Heavenly Father who loves us. . ."), a leader explains that "they've never seen anybody else doing it; they make it up as they go along."

It is this improvised version of Mormonism that is examined as the girls undertake their journey to Utah. In its simplest form, the film is divisible into two sections—New York and Utah Mormons don't understand each other (that's section one); New York and Utah Mormons *do* understand each other (section two). The primary concern is awkwardly delivered by one of the leaders at a preparation meeting with the girls: "In Utah, there are—it's a great percentage of Caucasians that live there. So you may feel that you're a bit different 'cause you guys have such rich and full backgrounds from your cultural diversity."

Adhering to a reality-television format, the film presents the girls looking back on how they felt at the time: one was "shocked" and another "was like—wow—I'm not used to being involved with a lot of white people." The stage is set for a clash of cultures.

This emphasis on difference continues as the girls arrive in Salt Lake City and finally in Provo. Once at EFY the girls are split up and assigned new roommates ("Where're you from?" "New York. Where're you from?" "Vernal."). They struggle to find common ground with their EFY groups but mostly end up either quietly marginalized or looking away, rolling their eyes. "I felt so miserable. I felt really left out," says one participant.

*Sisterz in Zion* explores specific differences between New York Mormons and Utah Mormons. The New York girls like dancing and basketball, while their Western counterparts like waterskiing, suggesting not only a geographical but an economic divide. The girls are amazed at how clean Utah is and at how slowly everyone walks. Many of these differences seem rather superficial, but for the girls they are obstacles to becoming a part of the EFY family. A



move toward reconciliation takes place when Daisy—one of the New York girls—takes a turn teaching her EFY group about the Holy Ghost. For one of the first times in the film, girls from Utah are shown smiling at Daisy. The light piano music cues us in: the tides are starting to turn. Shortly afterward the New York girls perform a self-choreographed merengue dance for the EFY talent show and—in a moment strangely akin to *Napoleon Dynamite*—their somewhat sloppy performance is met with wild cheers from the crowd. The moment is important to the girls: not only a spiritual but a cultural gap has been spanned.

As EFY wraps up, the girls don't want to leave or—in the words of one of the girls—don't want to go back to the ghetto. A huge group of EFY girls gather to sing "As Sisters in Zion" and shed tears. Where there had been cold stares, now there are warm hugs. And in one more (surprising) payoff, the girls meet the general president of the Young Women organization, Susan Tanner, and tearfully recite the Young Women motto for her.

As a work of reality television, Puente does an admirable job with this film. She is clearly a talented photographer and editor. Producer Tom Leffler has noted that the film is an example of how documentary film can give a "voice to the voiceless"—another John Grierson mantra. But *Sisterz in Zion's* reality-television style, while a useful way to move a story along quickly, impedes some of the girls' ability to project their own voice. The style involves rapid crosscutting between interviews and observational footage, a technique that gives the filmmaker more creative license as she lays out the story's trajectory. But this very freedom to control the story can generate distrust in an audience. How faithful is the film to what actually took place? Were *all* the girls really that disenchanted with EFY until they danced the merengue? The film does not answer these questions, although I suspect the girls' transition from "misunderstood neighbors" to "great pals" was much more nuanced than the film portrays. Many of these nuances are sacrificed in favor of a simplified three-act formula that is familiar and comforting to reality television audiences.

Any critique of this film, however, must be qualified with a note that the piece was not meant to be widely seen; in fact, most of the people who were supposed to see the film—members of the New York New York Stake—were already aware of the girls' adventure. For that reason, it is impressive that the footage Puente took at EFY is as detailed and comprehensive as it is, since it was made not for the world's eyes, but for a couple hundred Mormons in New York. Filming at EFY was essentially an act of service, the fulfillment of a calling in her local Mormon community.

Which brings me back to Grierson and Zavattini. Puente's film is ultimately an elaboration of a video postcard composed by some New York Saints (Puente and the girls). When it premiered on BYU-TV in October 2006 between the Sunday sessions of general conference, the postcard was "mailed" to Mormons watching conference across the globe. Let's hope that between future conference sessions some of those Saints will get a chance to write her back.

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## Vampires with Pamphlets

RANDY ASTLE

A review of two DVD releases of *Trapped by the Mormons* (1922, 2005)

TODAY A TITLE LIKE *Trapped by the Mormons* might evoke images of Jell-O salad and casseroles being shoved through a new neighbor's door, but it was not always so. Believe it or not, there was a time when Mormons were actually feared more for their supposed promiscuity than for their side dishes, and it was in such an era that the film *Trapped by the Mormons* emerged in 1922. This release date eventually placed it within the public domain, resulting in various VHS releases and an unwatchably bad DVD offered online by some LDS film enthusiasts. It was not until October 2006, however, that a respectable transfer was offered on DVD. Those who had been anticipating this release were doubly blessed for their patience, as within one month we received not one but two DVD versions of this camp classic: Grapevine Video's release of the original 1922 film and Cherry Red Productions' 2005 remake (with the original included as a bonus feature). Though there are some major disappointments in both releases, fans of *Trapped by the Mormons* can now sit down with a bowl of Jell-O and rejoice in anti-Mormon fervor in the comfort of their own homes.

Before evaluating these modern releases, it might prove useful to touch on the history of the original in its own context. The film's plot centers around the relationship between the mesmeric Mormon missionary Isoldi Keene and his prey, a young Manchester girl named Nora Prescott. Nora's father is an invalid and her mother a simpleton, but her fiancé, Jim, a strapping young naval officer, is a symbol of Edwardian virility. Still, it is no difficult matter for the powerful and alluring Isoldi to bring Nora under his spell, have her terminate her engagement, and commit to elope, events which quickly bring the meaning of the title into full play.

*Trapped by the Mormons* has often been considered the most important and lethal of all silent anti-Mormon films, perhaps because of its ready availability

1. The restored 1922 *Trapped by the Mormons* is available through <http://www.grapevinevideo.com> and <http://www.halevideo.com>. Cherry Red Productions' 2005 remake is available at <http://www.trappedbythemormons.com>.

and contemporary missionary correspondence, among other factors. But the truth is that it was a critical and, most likely, commercial failure, essentially ensuring the demise of anti-Mormon films until the 1960s.

The roots of anti-Mormon cinema go back to at least 1843, when Edward Marryat published *Monsieur Violet: His Travels and Adventures among the Snake Indians*, a work often considered the advent of anti-Mormon literature. Among other things, it introduced the Danites—a marauding band of secret Mormon hit men—into literature, where they quickly took on a life of their own and became the “myth that would define Mormonism.”<sup>2</sup>

The Danites were soon joined by the twin evils of polygamy and the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Narratives invariably featured marauding Mormons killing and deceiving in order to claim more and more wives. By the time Arthur Conan Doyle inserted a Mormon element into the first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1886), it was simply old hat.

Though the genre had worn thin by the 1890s, the Reed Smoot Senate Trial, begun in 1904, reignited anti-Mormon sentiment. Public attention, including that of all of the nation's major newspapers, persistently focused on Salt Lake City and the continuation of polygamy after the 1890 Manifesto, causing a public relations nightmare for Joseph F. Smith and other Church leaders. Within this maelstrom came the first known film to satirize the Church, American Mutoscope & Biograph's 1905 short comedy *A Trip to Salt Lake City*. (Amazingly, this film is not only extant but is included, for the first time on video, on the Grapevine DVD.) Nothing followed this film for several years, but in late 1911 and early 1912 nearly a dozen anti-Mormon films were released in England, Denmark, and the United States, the result of a wave of ill feelings that had swept through Europe. LDS missionaries were banished from Germany in 1910, and in 1911 an organized campaign to do likewise began in the United Kingdom.

One of the chief figures in this movement was a young author pen-named Winifred Graham (Mrs. Theodore Cory), who published her second anti-Mormon novel, *The Love Story of a Mormon*, during this campaign. World War I diverted attention from the Mormon problem, but a few film productions still emerged, most notably Famous Players-Lasky's *A Mormon Maid*, a prestige production that found tremendous success in America in 1917. After the war, Graham undertook a successful American speaking tour and launched another British campaign in 1922 in response to the postwar return of LDS missionaries to England. One of her chief endeavors was to persuade

2. Austin, 62–63.

the fledgling Master Films studio at Teddington to adapt *The Love Story of a Mormon* into *Trapped by the Mormons*. The studio simultaneously created the original *Married to a Mormon*, a film that did not derive from Graham's work but did fit the longstanding mold for anti-Mormon works. Both films were written by Frank Miller and directed by H. B. Parkinson.

Unfortunately for Graham, by 1922 public perception of the LDS Church had swung against her. The movement yielded some ill feelings and a little mob violence but quickly ran out of steam; even other anti-Mormon activists conceded polygamy was a moot issue. Rather than drive the Mormons from the country, the movement apparently strengthened the Church's position. For instance, a congregation in York was reestablished after having been closed for three years, and the April 1922 conference at Grimsby had double the attendance of the previous October. Reed Smoot successfully blocked the films' distribution in the United States, and missionaries in England, South Africa, Australia, and elsewhere (including Ezra Taft Benson and Marion G. Romney) stood outside theaters distributing tracts that rebutted the films. G. Osmond Hyde in Hull, England, wrote home that *Trapped* "was the best stroke of advertising that we have put forth since coming over here. In three evenings we let more people know that we are here than we could have done in three months at ordinary tracting from door to door."<sup>3</sup>

The response from the British public is even more interesting. Critics universally decried both films. Of *Trapped*, one wrote: "There is no room for propaganda on the screen. . . . It is inartistic and usually dull if not boring; this picture is no exception."<sup>4</sup> And another of *Married*: "Unfortunately, it is not only propaganda but very rubbishy melodrama, made worse by the continual hinting at dreadful immoralities which are never shown."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the choicest criticism, which is quoted on the Grapevine DVD's back cover, came from the *London Daily Mail*: "'Trapped by the Mormons,' a British film, which has been showing this week at two West End theatres, is such absolute rubbish that to exhibit it is nothing short of an insult to public intelligence."<sup>6</sup> Such opinions apparently carried into the public. One theater manager reported that "the film is a great disappointment; it is a poor play; the attendance is far short of our expectation."<sup>7</sup> Not only did this theater manager allow the missionaries to pass out over 3,000 pamphlets at his establishment, both he and his secretary later purchased a copy of the Book of Mormon.

Flash forward seventy-eight years to *God's Army* and a resurgence of interest

3. Hyde, 5.

4. Nelson, 152.

5. Ibid., 154.

6. Summers, 222.

7. Whitney, 223.

in Mormon-themed films, centered primarily around theatrical features but also videos, documentaries, and even modern anti-Mormon films, like HBO's *Angels in America* (2003). In this atmosphere, brothers Richard and E. Hunter Hale, the owners of the archival firm Hale Video Services (Hunter is also the programming director at Salt Lake City's Organ Loft), decided to make a definitive version of *Trapped* available on DVD. The Hale brothers have long been interested in the preservation of LDS films; in 1970, for instance, they performed another marvelous service when they discovered and restored a great deal of footage shot by Shirl and Chet Clawson, the first great LDS filmmakers, from around 1921.<sup>8</sup> By 2005 they teamed up with the Phoenix-based Grapevine Video and spent over a year restoring *Trapped*'s image and creating the DVD. Not only did the Hales work without any pay, they are donating their proceeds to the Church's Perpetual Education Fund. As Hunter said, "We decided that it was time this little anti-Mormon film did some good [for] the Church."<sup>9</sup>

The resulting product has a little to criticize and a great deal to praise. At first blush the image quality, with innumerable scratches and marks, leaves much to be desired. But even the most cursory comparison with any other video version—such as that on Cherry Red's DVD—demonstrates how remarkable the transfer actually is; this is the best image quality I have seen, short of a 16mm print. One wishes the budget had been larger for more digital cleanup, but both focus and registration are good, and the entire film, to my knowledge, is present and accounted for—no small feat for a picture from this era. Many films remain in pieces at best and *Married to a Mormon*, for example, is entirely lost.

With that said about the image, the best part about this release is its soundtrack. The Organ Loft's Blaine Gale, who first accompanied the film at a 2005 commemorative screening at Brigham Young University, recorded his accompaniment at Peery's Egyptian Theater in Ogden, where the Wurlitzer pipe organ—complete with all the bells and whistles desired for film accompaniment—had been restored as recently as July 2004. The soundtrack is presented in 4.0 Surround Sound with Dolby noise reduction. A marvelous little documentary in the disc's special features demonstrates the hanging of a large IsoMike in the theater's sweet spot, plus all the audio engineering that accompanied Gale's performance. As for the music, the instrument is superb—one of the ten best in America, we are told—and Gale himself is a master. By remaining true to the filmmakers' intentions of villainizing the Mormons, he draws us into the picture and allows the camp element—meaning that the film's serious

8. Heslop, 15.

9. "Old Anti-Mormon Film to Benefit the Church Now."

intentions are so overwrought they yield comedic results—to speak for itself.

Three other bonus features on the DVD deserve special mention. The first is the inclusion of *A Trip to Salt Lake City*, mentioned above. The fact that this film has survived, in the Library of Congress and then on a 16mm print by Blackhawk Films, is a miracle. Again, the print is clean and we are offered not one but two musical options. Second is the text of Winifred Graham's entire original novel, which Hunter Hale apparently retyped by hand, a true labor of love. The book is a lengthy but lightweight work, making it a quick read, and its controls are easily navigable. Having access to this out-of-print book, regardless of the film accompanying it, should be reason enough for most LDS literature enthusiasts to purchase the DVD. Its lurid prose is a campy treat equal to the film it spawned, and it offers wonderful insights into film adaptation, Mormons in literature, and even early twentieth century British fiction.

The third remarkable bonus feature is the audio commentary by James V. D'Arc, Motion Picture Archivist at BYU. True, it lacks the adrenaline of a DVD commentary by, say, Robert Rodriguez, and D'Arc does not reveal as many production details as he does in his remarkable commentary for the DVD of Twentieth-Century Fox's *Brigham Young* (1940), but this latter point is simply because not much is known about *Trapped's* production beyond the historical context outlined above. As a B-film and a quickie, it was certainly nowhere nearly as notable a production as *Brigham Young*. The meat of D'Arc's commentary, therefore, comes in the middle when he analyzes the film thematically, drawing parallels between *Trapped* and vampire lore, *Dracula* in particular, using both Bram Stoker's novel and the 1931 Bela Lugosi film. This analysis, I believe, is central to a full understanding of *Trapped by the Mormons*, particularly because it moves beyond the specific motion picture at hand to address how Mormonism and all "deviant" cultures and religions have been rhetorically cast as exotic, oriental, and irrational by the societies they confront. Terryl Givens examines such imagery in his book *Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (1997), but D'Arc's close reading here is invaluable as one of the most powerful case studies available.

The quality of the transfer, soundtrack, and this bonus material makes Grapevine's DVD an invaluable addition to any library, far more important and enjoyable than the vast majority of LDS videos. Nevertheless, the DVD has various problems that require negotiation. The unnecessary animated menus, title cards, and explanatory scrolls are a bit annoying and are often inaccurate, such as in mentioning a film called *The Clutches of the Mormons*, which, to my knowledge, does not exist. The DVD also falls into the common

trap of attributing *A Trip to Salt Lake City* to Thomas Edison when in fact it was made by his archrival Biograph, a company created by his estranged former employee W. K. L. Dickson.

But most disappointing is the documentary disingenuously called "On LDS Film." Given the historical context of the feature presentation, I expected a discussion of anti-Mormon films, institutional films, or perhaps other Mormon representations, such as in *Wagon Master* (1950) or *Paint Your Wagon* (1969), thus creating a context for the recent rise of LDS feature films. It is disappointing, therefore, when the documentary passes through a cursory mention of *Brigham Young* into a full-fledged hagiography of Richard Dutcher, complete with not one but two complete trailers, for *Brigham City* and *States of Grace*. This would be acceptable if the documentary had then returned to discuss other aspects of Mormon cinema, but it never does. Though Dutcher is certainly one of the most important and accomplished figures in the history of LDS film, asserting that the seven years since *God's Army* constitute the whole of LDS cinema is historically inaccurate and culturally insular. A DVD of *Trapped by the Mormons* seems like the perfect place to discuss LDS film before *God's Army*, but unfortunately those interested in the first century of LDS cinema will not find anything here.

They may, however, be interested in the reinterpretation of *Trapped* by Ian Allen of Cherry Red Productions in his 2005 remake. Allen, a native Utahn and former practicing Latter-day Saint, is not alone in returning to anti-Mormon material from long ago. In 1996 TNT produced a new film version of *Riders of the Purple Sage*, a Zane Grey novel that has seen several cinematic versions since 1918. Other films, like *The Avenging Angel* (1995) and *September Dawn* (2007), have rehashed cinematic material familiar since 1912. Allen's work is still remarkable, however, as an homage to the silent anti-Mormon film: he not only created a deliberate remake, but did so in black and white and *silent*, complete with synthesized organ music. He set out, in other words, to create the first anti-Mormon art house film. The new *Trapped by the Mormons* is therefore arguably more ambitious than Grapevine's restoration of the original. Where it is successful it is more engaging, but where it fails it fails more deeply.

The film's greatest strength—second only to its sheer originality—is its thematic vision. Indeed, Allen's and D'Arc's interpretations are surprisingly similar. If Winifred Graham's intention was to imply Mormonism's vampiric qualities, then Allen throws off the gloves and makes his Mormons into bloodsucking, winged demons. On a secondary level, his Nora is also more obviously sexually aroused by Isoldi's powers, most blatantly as she uses his tract not once but

twice as a masturbatory aid. The bald vampirism and eroticism help firmly swing the production into the realm of camp (making a subtext the prime text is always a wonderful way to achieve camp or parody), but ironically it also causes the film to suffer from a lack of subtlety. Outright vampires and polygamous zombies are a thrilling component (and really are the *raison d'être* of doing a remake at all), but in many cases the baby is tossed out with the bathwater: the humor, mystery, and intrigue of the original are completely lost as well. In making the subtext explicit, the narrative can be gutted, leaving nothing but a hollow shell.

The film suffers from various other problems, some technical, some directorial. Though the production is impressive for a no-budget film, it is unfortunate that the crew had to shoot on Mini-DV in color and then change the footage to black and white in postproduction. Not only is this a major handicap to the cinematographer on the set, but standard definition video's contrast ratio (the range between the whitest white and blackest black) is not able to deal with such a noirish picture. The truly unfortunate result is that many dim areas where detail is desired come out as nothing more than large pools of pitch.

On the directorial level, the film appears poorly cast, particularly in the leads. Emily Riehl-Bedford as Nora is neither beautiful enough to seize Isoldi's desire, innocent enough to fall under his spell, nor, ironically, mature enough to be his accomplice and, later, victor. Isoldi himself, however, presents the greater problem, as he is played by Johnny Kat, an alias for Stacey Whitmire, a New York City drag king who makes her living impersonating men. Surely Allen was seeking some sort of name recognition with the drag circuit crowd, but he was also apparently playing with the story's gender roles and Isoldi's "incomparable manliness" specifically. Having a woman play this polygamous he-man is a rather keen idea and the thematic possibilities it introduces are interesting, but unfortunately it comes off flat. Instead of creating gender-based intrigue, the film simply leaves us with a wet rag of an Isoldi, one whose presence is uncanny, whose manner is stilted well beyond the acting style of the 1920s, and whose sexual allure is nonexistent. More important than Isoldi's sexuality, however, is his mesmerism, and unfortunately Kat captures none of the exoticism or allure of Lewis Willoughby's original performance.

There are other missteps throughout the film. It takes itself too seriously much of the time, and there is evidence, particularly in his audio commentary to the original film, that Allen misunderstands various key scenes. For instance, in the scene where Isoldi pretends to raise a woman from the dead, Allen misses entirely the connection between gypsies and Mormons, two dishonest undesirables

in Winifred Graham's England. Instead of using a gypsy caravan he sets his scene in a regular house, robbing the moment of its subtext, and his commentary disdains the presence of the gypsies' horse in the original, leaving one no alternative but to conclude that he has missed entirely the point of the scene.

In addition to other examples, I found the film's final moment troubling. Back in Jim's stale but protective arms, Nora apparently passes through a parade of emotions that would be a tall order for any actress to pull off. Whatever the desired effect, it is toppled by her last-moment, halting smile at the camera, which conveys neither meaning nor resolution. In this case it appears that Allen mistook as enigmatic something that is merely vague.

Despite such moments, the film is truly a delight for fans of Mormonism's strange cabinet of curiosities, and it will surely be seen at repertory cinemas for years to come. And while I encourage all interested Latter-day Saints to procure a copy, potential viewers should note that this version is firmly in R-rated territory. Given a choice between the two discs, Grapevine's restoration is the easy choice. The original is, and will always remain, the definitive version.

I hope that we've not seen the last of *Trapped by the Mormons*. In addition to other reinterpretations, there is still great potential for another restoration by the likes of Criterion, Tartan, or Anchor Bay, and it has long been my dream to see new scores akin to Giorgio Moroder's 1984 rock-'n'-roll *Metropolis* or a new composition by the Alloy Orchestra. Let us only hope that anti-Mormon madness will be with us for years to come.

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## Contributors

**RANDY ASTLE** serves as *Irreantum's* Film and Photography Editor. He is currently writing a book on LDS cinema and has taught the subject at Brigham Young University. He lives in New York City with his wife and daughter.

**J. SCOTT BRONSON** is from San Diego and now lives in Orem, Utah, with his family. He studied theatre at Brigham Young University and has acted in scores of stage and television productions from Utah to California. He directs for the stage and has served on the boards of two theatre companies in Utah County, one of which he cofounded. He has written around a dozen plays, including road shows and Mayhew award winners. In 2001 his play *Stones* won the Association for Mormon Letters' award for best drama.

**PAT DEBENHAM** is a professor of Modern Dance and Music Theatre at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. He is a Certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst and for fifteen years was codirector of Contemporary DanceWorks—a semiprofessional modern dance company in Utah. He and his dancing wife, Kathie, conduct community workshops entitled *Move and Be Moved*.

**THOM DUNCAN** has been writing and producing his own plays since high school. He is the founder of the Nauvoo Theatrical Society, a nonprofit organization that encourages the production of plays by LDS playwrights.

**ELLEN FAGG** grew up on a filbert farm in Oregon. She holds an MFA from the University of Iowa and is currently the theatre critic for the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

**SHELLEY T. GRAHAM** has a BA in theatre education and an MA in theatre history and criticism from Brigham Young University. She recently left teaching dramaturgy and theatre history at BYU to follow her husband to the University of Georgia. She implemented the dramaturgy program at BYU, which now, after six years, provides student dramaturgs for each of its mainstage shows and for professional productions throughout Utah. She is currently a freelance dramaturg in Athens, Georgia, and mother of three.

**SARAH E. JENKINS** is a graduate student in English at Brigham Young University studying contemporary American poetry. She has contributed

to the Mormon Literature Database and served on the staffs of *BYU Magazine* and *Inscape*. She is originally from Bountiful, Utah.

**NAN PARKINSON MCCULLOCH** studied theatre and dance at Brigham Young University and Weber State University. She is an avid theatergoer, actor, and performer. She lives in Draper, Utah, with her husband, Don, who supports her "treading the boards." She enjoys writing personal essays and will publish in *Dialogue* this spring.

**MARVIN PAYNE** is a professional actor, writer, songsmith, and recording artist. He has released a dozen albums of original songs and has helped craft widely produced plays, including *The Planemaker*, *Charlie's Monument*, *The Trail of Dreams*, and *Wedlocked*.

**THOMAS F. ROGERS** studied playwrighting at the Yale School of Drama and taught Russian literature for thirty-one years at Brigham Young University and earlier at Howard University and the University of Utah. The author of a score of plays, he is the recipient of, respectively, lifetime achievement and lifetime membership awards from the Mormon Arts Festival and the Association for Mormon Letters. His wife, Merriam, and he have seven children and thirty-one grandchildren. Together Tom and Merriam have served a mission in Russia and taught at Peking University in Beijing, China.

**ERIC SAMUELSEN** is an award-winning playwright with several plays as well as theatre and film reviews to his credit. He is an associate professor at Brigham Young University's Theatre and Media Arts Department and president of the Association for Mormon Letters.

**MORAG PLAICE SHEPHERD** was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. She received her BA from Brigham Young University and is currently working on an MA in theatre history, theory, and criticism. Her play *CAKE* will be presented at BYU in 2008. Recent credits include *Playa* in *The Beggar's Opera* and *Jacinta* in *Fuente Ovejuna*.

**BEN UNGUREN** lives with his wife and three children in Tuckahoe, New York. He recently received a master's degree from New York University and currently teaches early morning seminary.



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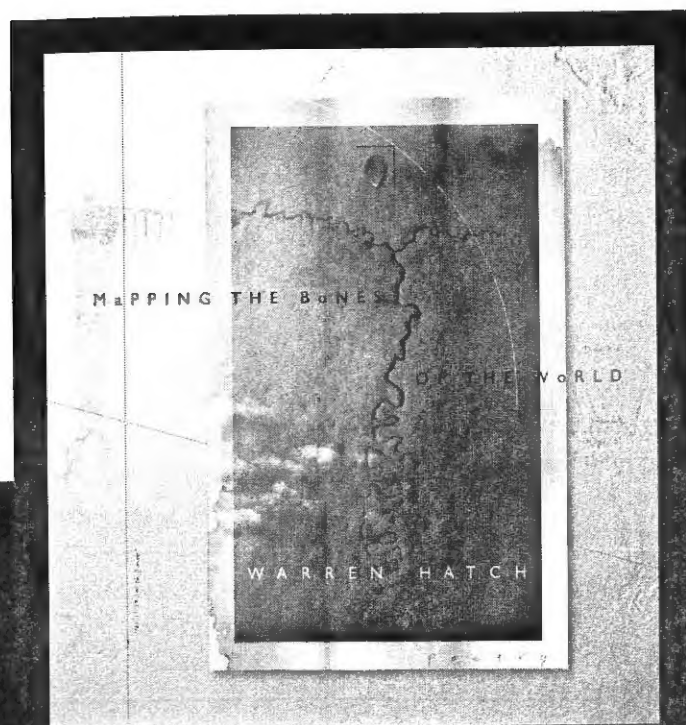
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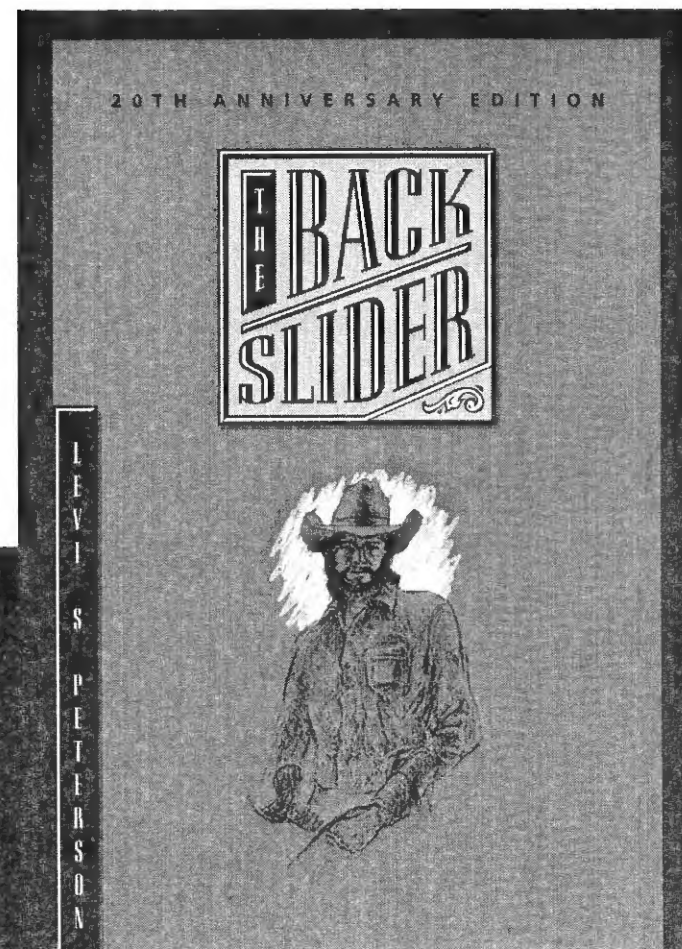
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